

A new century. New kinds of media controversies.

POLITICAL CARTOONING AND THE REED SMOOT HEARINGS

By Michael H. Paulos



They All Have to Bow to Him.

I have been horribly caricatured and made hideous in cartoons. . .

—JOSEPH F. SMITH, 1904

IN THE PAST YEAR, POLITICAL CARTOONS HAVE BEEN a source of great controversy in the U.S. and around the world. In early February 2006, all six of the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs denounced a *Washington Post* cartoon depicting Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as a doctor treating a



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quadruple-amputee soldier and claiming he was listing his condition as “battle hardened.”¹ Labeling the cartoon “reprehensible,” “callous,” and “beyond tasteless,” these Pentagon officials publicly denounced the cartoon as offensive to U.S. military personnel who “have suffered traumatic and life-altering wounds,” sparking an interesting public debate on the limits of cartooning propriety and the freedom of the press.

Shortly thereafter, I watched in shock the violent rioting in the Middle East and across the world over the publication in a Denmark newspaper of a political cartoon of Muhammad, depicting the Islamic prophet's headdress as a bomb.² Muslim extremists and terrorists used the cartoon to incite riots and abet hatred. The media was filled with pictures of militants protesting and holding signs stating, “Europe. Take Some Lessons From 9/11”; “Exterminate Those Who Slander Islam”; “Behead Those Who Insult Islam”; and “Europe Is The Cancer, Islam Is The Answer.”³ While the majority of American news-

papers and mainstream media outlets covered the protests, they elected not to print the Muhammad cartoons, leaving some U.S. citizens without the full story and thus without a full understanding of what, exactly, sparked the outrage.⁴

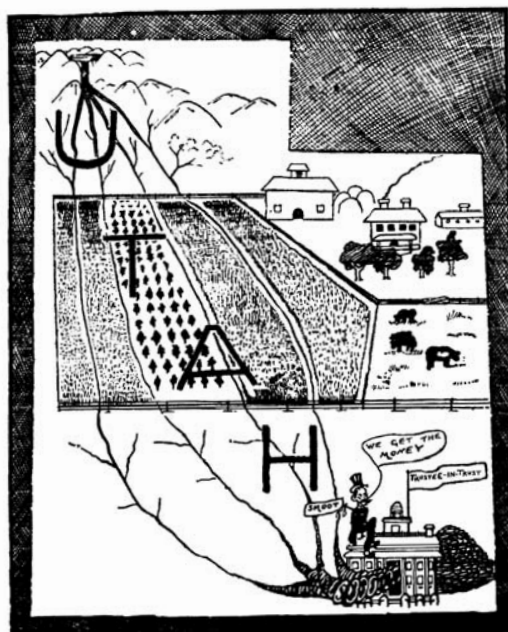
These controversies happened to occur during the final stages of my preparing a one-volume annotated abridgement of the U.S. Senate hearings dealing with the seating of LDS apostle and senator Reed Smoot, which were in full swing exactly a century ago. My research on the Smoot hearings naturally led me to examine the cartooning and newspaper coverage of the event. As the examples and explanations that follow demonstrate, political cartooning and the media's sense of its role in 1906 were a far cry from what they are in 2006.

Smith's frustration was aimed primarily at the *Salt Lake Tribune*, which over the four-year period of the Smoot investigation, published hundreds of unflattering cartoons of Smith and the Church.⁷ Responding to Smith's displeasure at its coverage, the *Tribune* pounced:

So Joseph F. Smith does not like to be cartooned as he really is. . . . What is the matter with Joseph F. Smith? Is he better than Theodore Roosevelt or William James Bryan? Is he any worse than Johann Most or Jack the Ripper? All men who come before the public either in good or bad light, are subject to the cartoonist's pencil. But this individual—the chief law-breaker of his generation—tries to make this community regard him with a peculiar sanctity. Joseph F. Smith is



Hiding Behind the Temple, Reed Smoot, Draws the Fire of the Protestants.



UTAH FERTILIZING THE CHURCH COLONIES—WHERE THE TITHING GOES.



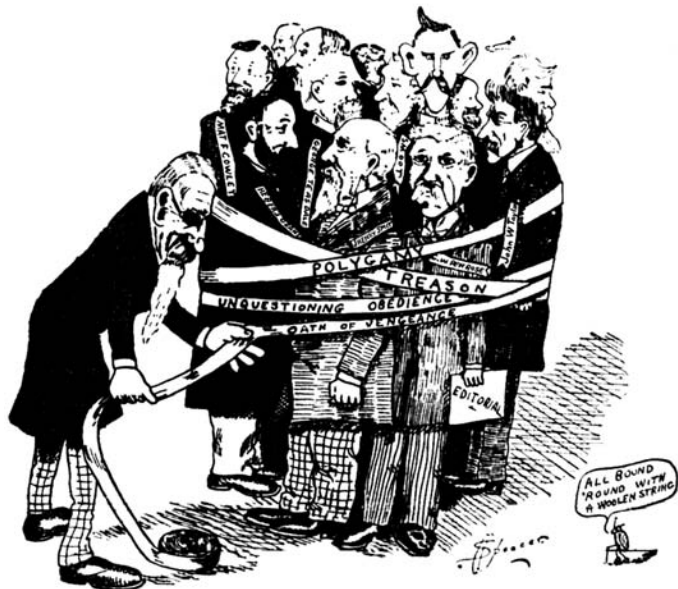
SEEN IN THEIR TRUE RELATION.
"SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, REED."

LEFT: "HIDING BEHIND THE TEMPLE, REED SMOOT, DRAWS THE FIRE OF THE PROTESTANTS," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 December 1904. The protestants who opposed Smoot finished making their arguments on 20 December 1904. CENTER: "UTAH FERTILIZING THE CHURCH COLONIES—WHERE THE TITHING GOES," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 January 1905. Smoot's relationship with the Church's Trustee in Trust (Joseph F. Smith) was a concern in Washington, as all tithing monies given to the Church were under Smith's control. RIGHT: "SEEN IN THEIR TRUE RELATION: 'SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, REED,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 February 1905. FACING PAGE: "THE KING OF UTAH," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 June 1906. The figures bowing before King Smith are members of the Utah state legislature.

THE SMOOT HEARINGS and the national media scrutiny received during the hearings by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Senator Smoot, and LDS prophet Joseph F. Smith were brutally sensational.⁵ In a letter to Smoot, President Smith complained about how he'd been beaten up in the media. After lamenting the "scandalous treatment I have received from the public press on account of my testimony given before the Committee," Smith continued, "Of course you know how I have been horribly caricatured and made hideous in cartoons, and slandered and lied about most outrageously. . . ."⁶

no better than the great men of this Nation, and he is perhaps no worse than the other wicked men of this country—and he must take the fate common to all. . . . What is the matter with Smith? The *Tribune* will tell. Smith is raging because the truth is being told about him, both in language and in picture; he writhes under the truth. Being unable to defend himself against it, and being too brutally willful in his wrongdoing to retreat and permit this State to have peace. . . . Well, let him stop his infamies, and then the cartooning will stop.⁸

IN THE BUNCH



Senator Smoot Is a Responsible Member of the Disloyal and Polygamous Hierarchy.

THE LID IS OFF!



LEFT: "IN THE BUNCH," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 March 1906. This cartoon depicts Joseph F. Smith with the Quorum of the Twelve under wraps. The apostles appearing in this cartoon include John Henry Smith, Reed Smoot, Matthias Cowley, John W. Taylor, Heber J. Grant, George Teasdale, and Charles W. Penrose. RIGHT: "THE LID IS OFF," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 21 February 1907. This cartoon was published the day after Smoot was vindicated. The cartoon mocks the fact that Smith had been hiding several Church leaders alleged to have entered into post-manifesto marriages. Pictured here are Charles W. Penrose, Matthias W. Cowley (deposed apostle), John W. Taylor (deposed apostle), and J. M. Tanner (deposed General Board of Education member). In the *Tribune's* perspective, since Smoot was no longer on trial, President Smith could unearth the fugitive church leaders. The phone message President Smith is receiving from Smoot is, "It's all safe now Brother."

Public sentiment nationwide was against Smoot and the Mormon Church. Wrote Smoot opponent and former First Methodist minister of Ogden, Dr. J. Wesley Hill:

The churches all over the land took the matter up and the newspapers have condemned Mormonism as un-Christian and un-American. I have seen some of the most severe cartoons where it [Mormonism] was represented as a devil-fish, as a destroyer of womanhood and as an influence of the most baneful character.⁹

Since so many articles contained extreme language as well as undocumented and untrue rumors, one can easily understand the frustration of both Smith and Smoot.¹⁰ An incredible amount of column space in Utah periodicals, especially the *Tribune* and its rival *Deseret Evening News* (now *Deseret Morning News*), was devoted to the Smoot hearings, including daily reports from Washington, transcripts of testimony, trenchant opinion columns, and, of course, lampooning cartoons.¹¹

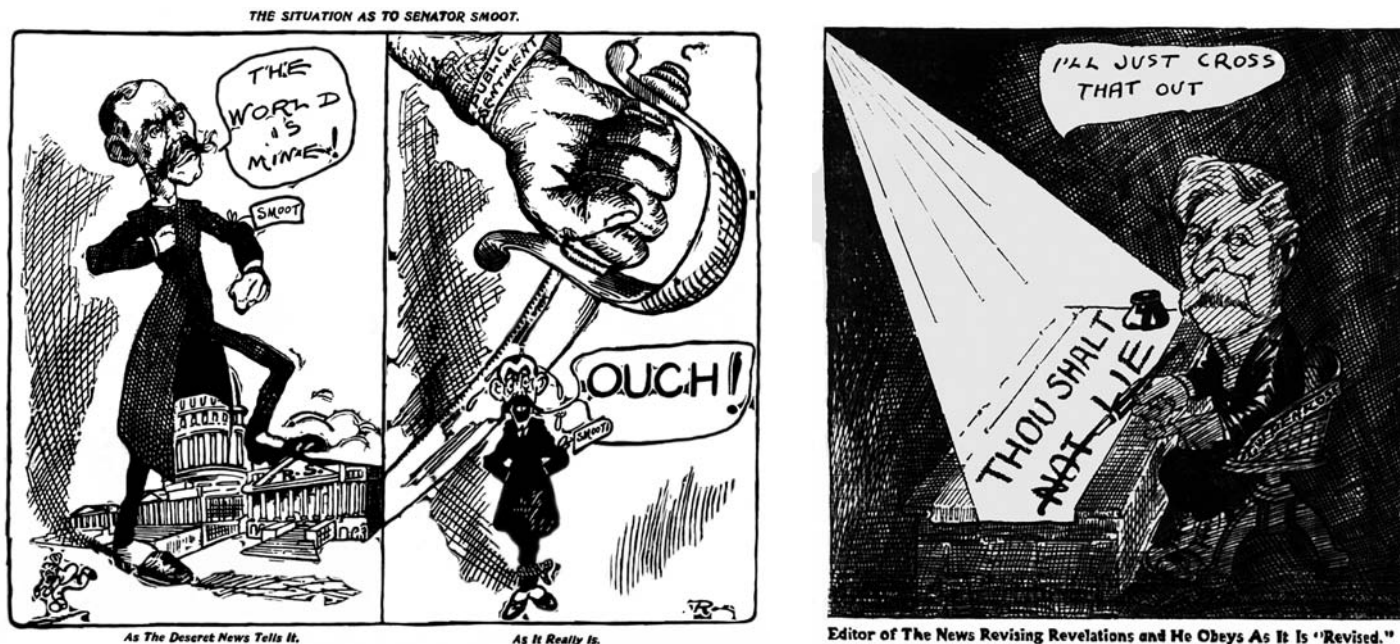
At the time of the hearings, the *Tribune* was owned by Utah Republican Senator Thomas Kearns (who had served in the U.S. Senate from 1901–1905). Smoot was also a Republican, and initially, he and Kearns were allies, but their friendship quickly deteriorated when Smoot's political machine squeezed Kearns out of power.¹² A bitter man, Kearns blamed Smoot and the Church for his demise, bolted the Republican Party, and assisted in establishing the anti-Mormon American party.¹³ Following these events, the *Tribune*, which had previously been an organ of the Republican Party, launched a frontal

anti-Mormon and anti-Smoot attack. Of the *Tribune's* reporting, the *Deseret Evening News* abrasively published the following:

The old anti-"Mormon" gall and wormwood and sinuous prevarication and abuse in the *Tribune*, oozes out in acrid volume mingled with a pretended half-eulogy, half sarcasm, about the testimony of President Smith before the committee. But it matters little. The protestors and their organ will elicit much more than they want in the examination and will fall in other directions. The country will learn the facts, and the rational and sensible will perceive the true situation, and whether prejudice prevail against Senator Smoot or not, the result will be the spread of "Mormonism" throughout the world. But we advise the antis not to shout too loudly or too soon.¹⁴

Kearns hired the angry and lapsed Mormon Frank J. Cannon to be the *Tribune's* editor. Though Cannon had fallen from grace and was no longer taken seriously by his LDS peers,¹⁵ his editorials became so inflammatory that he could not be ignored.¹⁶ Cannon's extreme editorials even became a hair shirt for many Gentiles living in Utah, who blasted his work as editor of the *Tribune*. The following sarcastic assessment appeared in *Truth*, a weekly newspaper published in Salt Lake City by John W. Hughes, a non-Mormon:

The specials from Washington which appear daily in that paper one would have thought are sufficiently



LEFT: "THE SITUATION AS TO SENATOR SMOOT," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 December 1904. The cartoons above are an outgrowth of some of the newspaper wars between the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Evening News*. The first cartoon represents the *Tribune's* opinion that the *Deseret Evening News* was spinning its reporting on how the Smoot case was unfolding. RIGHT: "EDITOR OF THE NEWS REVISING REVELATIONS AND HE OBEYS AS IT IS "REVISED," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 December 1904. The second cartoon is a mockery of the testimony given at the hearing by George Reynolds and *Deseret Evening News* editor Charles W. Penrose. The issue at hand was the Wilford Woodruff Manifesto, which Reynolds testified that he, Penrose, and John R. Winder helped revise for publication. The *Tribune* mocks Penrose's alleged penchant to revise scripture.

mendacious, misleading and cold bloodedly false to suit the most depraved taste. However, those masterpieces in their line, are not sufficiently depraved for the *Tribune*. To help out their deficiency the paper has its local staff at work, but the efforts of the latter are puny compared to the stuff that comes from the master mind at Washington. . . . How proud we Gentiles are of our self-constituted champions in the fight the *Tribune* is making on the Mormons! Tom Kearns, the leader of a pure and holy cause for principle's sake. It is to laugh. And the editor of the *Tribune*, ex-Senator Cannon, Mormons and Gentiles are proud of him. . . . In years gone by when the Cannon's [sic] ruled the church roost, Frankie received more favors from the church and the Mormon people than any other man. He sought all the church influence he could get and more too. He let nothing pass even to carrying a "recommend" from his bishop and certificate to the effect that he had paid his tithing and he is as much of a Mormon today as he ever was. Yes, we Gentiles are justly proud of him as a leader! We are like the lectures he reads us in the columns of the *Tribune*. We like to be told by him above all men of our duties as Gentiles and the responsibilities which rest upon us. He and Tom [Kearns] the great mentors.¹⁷

Frank Cannon was excommunicated on 15 March 1905.¹⁸ Using the bully pulpit provided by his *Tribune* post, Cannon

had tried his best to oust Smoot from the Senate. Despite Cannon's printed cacophony,¹⁹ Smoot was allowed to retain his U.S. Senate seat in 1907 by a vote in the Senate of 42–28. Cannon and the *Tribune* had been effective in getting the anti-Smoot message out, but their efforts failed, and Smoot ultimately served five terms in the Senate (1903–1933).

SINCE THE SMOOT hearings a century ago, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of overtly acerbic articles published on the topic of Mormonism in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The majority of inflammatory statements that appear today arise in the letter to the editor section, and then only rarely do they contain anything approaching the level of vitriol that was *de rigueur* of the Cannon editorship. By the same token, today's *Deseret Morning News* no longer prints aggressive retorts directed at the *Tribune*. Between 1903 and 1907, the *Tribune* consistently published cartoons that caricatured the LDS prophets and apostles. Nowadays, the *Tribune* never prints a malicious cartoon featuring a Mormon leader. Moreover, the aggregate U.S. media has adopted similar journalistic redlines that restrict the cartooning of some religious figures.

The Smoot/Smith cartooning and Muhammad cartoon controversy represent a fascinating hundred-year dichotomy that, in my assessment, yields mixed results. On the one hand, the media has taken a journalistic step forward by generally showing deference to religious figures. But it has taken a jour-

THE APOSTLE IS GOING SOME



"THE APOSTLE IS GOING SOME," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 February 1906. Controversial quotations from the *Journal of Discourses* were used by the protestants opposing Smoot as they asked questions of him and other church witnesses. These extracts provided some of the hearings' most entertaining moments.

nalistic step backward by becoming too cautious in much of its coverage and commentary. ☹

NOTES

1. For the *Washington Post* cartoon by Tom Toles, see <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/01/AR2006020102465.html>.
2. For the Muhammad cartoon, see <http://www.uriasposten.net/pics/JP-011005-Muhammed-Westerga.jpg>
3. For a list of these and other slogans, visit <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/?p=385> (accessed 11 December 2006).
4. Among the hundreds of U.S. newspapers and other media outlets that chose not to publish the Muhammad cartoon are: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, the Associated Press, NBC, MSNBC, CBS, CNN, and National Public Radio's website. The only U.S. media outlets to run the cartoon were the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Austin American-Statesman*, FOX News, and ABC. See *Salt Lake Tribune*, "The true motive for cartoon censorship," 11 February 2006.
5. Smoot historians Kathleen Flake and Harvard Heath have both noted the viciousness of the media's treatment of Smoot. See Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Harvard Heath, *Reed Smoot: First Modern Mormon* (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1990).
6. Joseph F. Smith to Reed Smoot, 9 April 1904. Smoot papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
7. See Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834-1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1983), 65-70.
8. *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Smith and the Cartoons," 9 January 1907.
9. *Salt Lake Herald*, "Smoot's Chances Very Poor," 2 May 1904. Dr. Hill said this while drumming up anti-Smoot petitions in his new ministry area of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

10. A. Reed Smoot granddaughter, Kathryn Smoot, wrote a senior honors thesis on the newspaper coverage of the Smoot Hearings. She concluded that the *Salt Lake Tribune* was more effective in communicating its anti-Smoot, anti-Mormon message than the *Deseret Evening News* was in refuting it. See Kathryn Smoot, "The Role of the Newspaper in the Reed Smoot Investigation: 1903-1907," (unpublished paper, special collections, University of Utah, 1964), 105.

11. Opinion columns on Smoot and issues related to the hearings appeared nearly every day in either the *Deseret Evening News* or *Salt Lake Tribune*. Strong allegations and skewed reporting from one paper elicited rebuttals from the other, and so on. A personal battle between the editors of each newspaper unfolded. LDS apostle Charles W. Penrose edited the *Deseret Evening News*, and Frank J. Cannon, an ex-Utah Senator and son of LDS General Authority George Q. Cannon, edited the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

12. Kearns's term ended in 1905, at which point he was not a candidate for reelection.

13. For a good study on the American Party, see Reuben Joseph Snow, "The American Party in Utah: A Study of Political Party Struggles During the Early Years of Statehood." M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1964.

14. *Deseret Evening News*, "Law and Testimony," 4 March 1904.

15. Cannon had alienated himself from his church and former friends. One measure of the animosity and disdain that Church leaders had come to feel for Cannon is the following statement made by newly called apostle George Albert Smith to Smooth's personal secretary: "Frank J. Cannon is as near crazy as he can be and will not last long if he does not repent of the evil he is seeking to bring upon the people. I am informed that he is using the strongest of stimulants to nerve him for the work he has sold himself to do. Poor Frank; what a splendid opportunity he had to make a record in the world for ability and for the blessing of the people amongst whom he was reared. He chose to be unclean and the result is evident in his ruined life. Reproached by those of his own blood, despised by those who pay him for his services, pitied by those who tried to make him useful and who did all they could to reform him when he had disgraced himself and the name he bore, he rushes along to sure destruction, not heeding the pleading of his own family and loved ones." George Albert Smith to Carl Badger 31 March 1905. As quoted in Rodney J. Badger, *Liahona and Iron Rod* (Family History Publishers, 1985), 264-65.

16. Smoot's personal secretary in Washington, Carl Badger, penned the following to his wife, "The [*Salt Lake Tribune*] is making a cur of itself; Frank Cannon is a fool. The trouble with a man when he begins to fight something that he thinks is wrong is that he is likely to go to the extreme. This is especially true when it comes to religion." Carl Badger to Rose Badger, 19 January 1905. As quoted in Badger, *Liahona and Iron Rod*, 246.

17. *Truth*, "The Cowardly Tribune," 21 January 1905, *Journal History*.

18. See *Salt Lake Herald*, "F. J. Cannon Finally Excommunicated," 15 March 1905. Carl Badger commented on the coverage of Cannon's excommunication in Washington D.C.: "The [*Washington Post*] this morning has a picture of Frank J. Cannon, accompanying a telegraphic announcement of his excommunication. I am told that the reason that Frank was cut off at this time was that he and others contemplated charging President Smith with apostasy [sic] at the coming Conference. I do not know that this is true." Carl Badger to Rose Badger, 15 March 1904. As quoted in Badger, *Liahona and Iron Rod*, 262.

19. Tithing money paid to the church became an issue at the Smoot hearings. Starving for attention, Cannon put a sinister spin on the impact of tithe-paying in Utah, "Mormon clerks pay, or are supposed to pay, their tithes to the church, and this tithe-paying practice becomes in the long run an equally-diffused community burden. The tithes paid indirectly by the Gentile merchants flow into the great secret treasury of the church leader, and may be utilized at any time to establish or reinforce business institutions in competition with these same Gentiles." *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Gentile Merchants in Peril," 30 November 1904, *Journal History*.

In response to this editorial, the Gentile-owned newspaper *Truth* suggested that Cannon's bluster about the evils of tithing smacked of hypocrisy. "The spectacle of [Cannon] . . . writing editorials . . . is enough to create a feeling of disgust with mankind. . . . Never in the history of Utah has such cordial and neighborly feeling existed between the Mormons and Gentile as a whole as now. . . . When did . . . Cannon come to the conclusion that it was wrong . . . to pay tithing? He paid his own tithing for last year and it was so recorded and when he was running for office and out on the stump he carried a Mormon's bishop certificate in his pocket . . . he thought it would aid in his political aspirations." *Truth*, "Senator Cannon and Tithing," 3 December 1904.