

EZRA TAFT BENSON, SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

December 7, 1954

Mr. Benson was born in Whitney, Franklin County, Idaho, August 4, 1899. He is the son of George T., and Sarah Dunkley Benson, and a great-grandson of the Mormon apostle, Ezra Taft Benson, one of the original pioneers who entered the Salt Lake Valley with Brigham Young on July 24, 1847. His parents were among the pioneer settlers of southern Idaho. He grew up on a farm in his native State and operated a farm there from 1923 to 1930.

He attended the Oneida Stake Academy at Preston, Idaho, from 1914 to 1918, and the Utah State Agricultural College at Logan, Utah, from 1918 to 1921.

From 1921 to 1923 he served as a missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles. On his return home, he continued his education at the Brigham Young University at Provo, Utah, where he was graduated with honors in 1926, and received a scholarship to Iowa State College at Ames, Iowa. He received his M.S. degree in agricultural economics from Iowa State College in 1927 and was elected to Gamma Sigma Delta, honor society of agriculture. He did graduate work at the University of California in 1937-38.

In 1929 Secretary Benson served as county agricultural agent, University of Idaho Extension Service, Preston, Idaho. From 1929 to 1930 he served as extension economist and marketing specialist, University of Idaho, Extension Division. In 1931 he was invited to head the new Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing inaugurated by the Extension Division of the University of Idaho.

He was instrumental in the organization of the Idaho Cooperative Council and served as its secretary from 1933-38. In the spring of 1939 he was appointed Executive Secretary of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, a federation of 4,600 cooperative groups. Since then he has served on several advisory

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committees and national boards in the field of agriculture. He has been a member of the executive committee of the American Institute of Cooperation since 1942; director of the Farm Foundation from 1946-50; appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a member of the National Agricultural Advisory Committee during World War II; member of the National Farm Credit Committee from 1940-41; United States delegate to the first International Conference of Farm Organizations in London, England, in 1946. In 1952 he was named chairman of the Board of Trustees of the American Institute of Cooperation. Approximately 1,500 farmer cooperatives, general farm organizations and land-grant colleges are affiliated with the A.I.C.

For many years Secretary Benson has been active in Scouting. He served as a Scoutmaster from 1918-29, Scout Commissioner in 1930-33; a member of the National Council and committees, Boy Scouts of America since 1939; a member of Region Twelve Executive Committee since 1945; a member of the National Executive Board since 1948. He was awarded the Silver Antelope in 1951 and was presented with scouting's highest honor, the Silver Buffalo, in 1954 at the National Court of Honor in recognition of distinguished service to the boyhood of America.

He has taken a prominent part in the activities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since his youth. While residing in Boise, Idaho, he served as president of the Boise Stake, which comprises all members of the Church residing in the Boise area. Following his move to Washington, D. C., in 1940 he was named by his Church as president of the Washington Stake, which includes all members of the Church in the National Capital area, Baltimore and Richmond.

On October 7, 1943, the Secretary became a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As such he is one of the General Authorities of the Church. He has been given a leave of absence from this responsibility while serving in the President's cabinet.

On January 15, 1946, he was appointed President of the European Mission of the Church with headquarters in London, England. Members of the Church throughout Europe were in distress following World War II, and he was responsible for the reorganization of the work of the Church in 14 countries of Europe, South Africa and the Near East. He also supervised the distribution of food, clothing, bedding, and other needed supplies through the welfare program of the Church. Over a period of 10 months he traveled some 60,000 miles through war-torn countries, strengthening the organization and administering necessary assistance. He was released from his call on December 11, 1946.

On September 10, 1926, he married Flora Smith Amussen. They are the parents of six children. Their oldest son, Reed, recently completed two years service with the U. S. Air Force as a chaplain and plans to resume his studies. Their second son, Mark, received his Master's Degree at Stanford University. He is married, has a son, and is managing a business in the District of Columbia area. The oldest daughter, Barbara, is attending Brigham Young University at Provo, Utah. The other three daughters, Beverly, Bonnie and Flora Beth are attending schools in the District of Columbia.

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Digest of Secretary Ezra Taft Benson's Activities

SCHOLASTIC

Student, Oneida Stake Academy, Preston, Idaho, 1914-18.  
Utah State Agricultural College, Logan, Utah, 1918-21.  
BS, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1926.  
MS, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, 1927.  
Graduate Studies, University of California, Berkeley, Calif., 1937-38.  
Awarded scholarships to Iowa State College and University of California.  
Elected to Gamma Sigma Delta, honor society of agriculture, 1927.

AGRICULTURAL

Farm operator in Idaho, 1923-30.  
County Agriculture Agent, University of Idaho Extension Service, Preston, Idaho, 1929-30.  
Extension Economist and Marketing Specialist, University of Idaho, Extension Division, Boise, Idaho, 1930-38.  
Organizer & Secretary, Idaho Cooperative Council, 1933-38.  
Executive Secretary, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, Washington, D. C., 1939-44.  
Member Executive Committee & Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees, American Institute of Cooperation, 1942-49.  
Chairman, Board of Trustees, American Institute of Cooperation, 1952.  
Member Farm Foundation, 1946-50.  
Member President Roosevelt's National Agricultural Advisory Commission during World War II.  
Member National Farm Credit Commission, 1940-41.  
Member American Marketing Association.  
Member Farm Economics Association.  
U. S. Delegate to First International Conference of Farm Organizations, London, England, May 1946.  
Advisor to U. S. Delegation at F.A.O., Copenhagen, Denmark, September, 1946.  
United States Secretary of Agriculture, beginning January, 1953.

ASSIGNMENTS AS SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

Chairman of the Board of Directors, Commodity Credit Corporation.  
Chairman Commodity Exchange Commission.  
Chairman Agriculture Research Policy Committee.  
Member Defense Mobilization Board.  
Member Board of Directors, Virgin Islands Corporation.  
Member Migratory Bird Conservation Commission.  
Member National Forest Reservation Commission.  
Member Smithsonian Institution.  
Member Joint U. S. Canadian Committee on Trade & Economic Affairs.  
Member Interdepartmental Committee on Migratory Labor.  
Member Transport Policy & Organization Committee.  
Member Water Resources & Policy Committee.  
Member Interdepartmental Savings Bond Committee.  
Member President's Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped.  
Member National Security Resources Board.

## BUSINESS & FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Gamma Sigma Delta  
Delta Nu  
Rotary Club  
Kiwanis Club  
Trustee, Robert A. Taft Memorial Foundation.

## SCOUTING

Soutmaster, 1918-29.  
Scout Commissioner, 1930-33.  
Member BSA National Council, since 1939.  
Member BSA Phillips Properties Committee.  
Member BSA Program Committee.  
Member BSA Editorial Board.  
Member BSA Relationships Committee.  
Member BSA Rural Service Committee.  
Member BSA Region Twelve Executive Committee, since 1945.  
Member BSA National Executive Board, since 1948.  
Awarded BSA Silver Antelope, 1951.  
Awarded BSA Silver Buffalo, 1954.

## CHURCH

British Mission, L. D. S. Church, 1921-23.  
Member Y.M.M.I.A. Stake Board, 1924-33.  
Member Sunday School Stake Board, 1924.  
Member Boise Stake Presidency, 1933-37.  
President, Boise Stake, Boise, Idaho, 1938-39.  
Member Washington District Council, Eastern States Mission, 1939-40.  
President, Washington Stake, Washington, D. C., 1940-44.  
Ordained an Apostle of the L.D.S. Church and set apart as a member of the Council of the Twelve, October 7, 1943.  
President, L.D.S. European Missions, 1946.  
Member, General Church Board of Education.  
Member, Board of Trustees, Brigham Young University.  
Honorary Master M-Man Award, 1948.

## HONORARY AWARDS

Master M-Man, June 19, 1948.  
Distinguished Alumni Award, Brigham Young University, June 3, 1950.  
BSA Silver Antelope Award, April 24, 1951.  
Honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, College of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, Los Angeles, California, June 15, 1951.  
Awarded Testimonial for Distinguished Service to Agriculture by the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, February 6, 1952.  
Honorary degree, Doctor of Laws, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, June 9, 1953.  
Honorary degree, Doctor of Agriculture, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, June 12, 1953.  
BSA Silver Buffalo for Distinguished Service to Boyhood, by the National Council, BSA, at National Court of Honor, Washington, D. C., May 29, 1954.

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