

gateway features

BENSON

Family and church, a strong morality and a solid sense of individualism—these are the antidotes to the "Threat to our Freedom." Only with the second breath does "state" come in, and then perhaps as much an offender as a defender. In any case its importance should not be primary but derivative.

Benson is not a politician but a prophet, warning us as they were warned of old, against our own ungodliness. With current political trends he is conversant but out of step. He would have us recognize the devil in omnipresent and omnipotent government. Benson is a loner, an apostle of that disappearing breed—the "individual."

Your Feature writers are David Winfield (whom you will remember from the Pearson issue) and Shirley Greene, drama 3, transfer student from UBC and BYU (Utah).

Ezra Taft Benson, Secretary of Agriculture in the Eisenhower administration, was this year's Henry Marshall Tory lecturer.

FAITH, PRAYERS AND LOYALTY

by Shirley Greene

Dr. Benson is a big man with friendly brown eyes. The rigid strained atmosphere in which he was required to speak Wednesday night made him obviously uncomfortable. By Thursday, President Johns' gracious hosting had redeemed us, and Dr. Benson was confident and relaxed.

"I believe truth to be a knowledge of things as they were, as they are, and as they are to be," replied Dr. Benson when asked to explain his statement, "... the truth shall make you free." "Knowledge tends to make people true. One who knows facts is not so likely to be bewildered."

CHURCH BEFORE STATE?

When asked how he, who espouses decentralized government, would handle social welfare, Dr. Benson smiled as if we had touched a favorite subject.

"I feel that the closer it is to the people, the more economical it is. But first the individual ought to do all in his power to care for himself. Then the responsibility falls to the family. Parents and children, brothers and sisters have a responsibility to each other. In my way of thinking, if there is still a serious need I like to feel that the church has a responsibility before the state."

I failed to ask what those of us who enjoy collecting unemployment



PHOTOS BY
CONRAD
STENTON

insurance during the cold winter would do in such a system. I doubt that we could toast our toes as nonchalantly if dad or brother were out earning our bread and butter.

"No nation will ever rise above the home. Family and home are our most basic institutions."

NO WIDER BROTHERHOOD?

This reply followed the question as to whether the state as described by Marx could ever replace the family with a wider brotherhood. Dr. Benson stated emphatically that it could not, and said that there is no adequate substitute for the family.

He cited the absence of a close-knit family unit as a major weakness in Communist Russia. In the USSR, he said, according to their own figures, 60% of the manual labour done outside the home is done by women. The mother has no time for the child. Children are taken to state nurseries where they remain for the entire day and are indoctrinated with the communist philosophy.

"But what about the Jewish Kibbutz system, Dr. Benson?"

FAMILY "COMING BACK"?

He stated that the system was effective in meeting an emergency situation. He added that on visiting some Kibbutim, he observed that the family is slowly coming back as the emergency situation recedes. "The leaders feel that private ownership of land by families will finally replace the present system," he concluded.

"Family unit" was an oft repeated phrase throughout the in-



terview. Dr. Benson has a great faith in the individual and in the intimate association of individuals in the family unit.

While serving as Secretary of Agriculture for the United States, members of his own party tried to force his resignation. They felt that Dr. Benson's stand against 90% parity could lose them the 1956 election. Dr. Benson refused to resign. He stated that his policies were for the good of the economy. He said the farmers were intelligent men who would realize this.

In his speech "The Threat To Our Freedom" Dr. Benson said the movement towards centralization can be

CENTRALIZATION—SLOWED DOWN, HALTED AND REVERSED

slowed down, halted and reversed by state and local governments insisting that theirs is the responsibility for local problems. We asked him to explain how local governments will come to accept such responsibility.

"It is largely an education process," he said. He pointed out that there have been some outstanding examples in recent year where local governments (in the U.S.) have refused federal aid. Such incidents should be widely publicized because the people must come to realize that the federal government gets its money from the people. After all, he concluded, the united states created the federal government.

Dr. Benson presented an optimistic view toward agriculture. He ex-

pressed the opinion that agriculture has a bright future. He mentioned that the time will come when nuclear power will be used to make the deserts blossom. Today many of us see nuclear power as a threat to our survival. I asked Dr. Benson if he felt that our world really does have much of a future.

"This is largely an individual problem," he stated. He said

"GOD IN HEAVEN IS INVOLVED IN THIS"

that it concerns our philosophy of life and how we live. "I believe God in Heaven is involved in this." He said this with the sincerity of a dedicated spiritual leader who has infinite confidence and belief in God.

I did not get a direct reply to the question of whether our world will survive, but Dr. Benson did not seem to be worried about it. Perhaps the answer lies in the conclusion of his speech on freedom.

"The days ahead are sobering and challenging and will demand the faith, prayers, and loyalty of every American. Our challenge is to keep America strong and free—strong socially, strong economically, and above all, strong spiritually, if our way of life is to endure."

The interview was over. Dr. Benson did not impress me as a clever politician, but rather as a humanitarian with a deep concern for the well-being of his fellowmen.