"That We Take All"

By Michael L. Mower
Brigham Young and early pioneer leaders faced a daunting task in the spring of 1849. While several companies of Latter-Day Saint pioneers had arrived in Utah, 14,000 remained in 40 camps in Western Iowa. The conditions faced by those left homeless and hungry since the departure from Nauvoo was heartrending. The Saints were often without adequate shelter and food, and they had little chance to secure better. The most fortunate were able to work as day laborers for Iowa farmers. However, even those with employment could seldom hope to save enough money to make the journey to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Anxious pioneers looked to President Brigham Young for assistance.

On October 6, 1849, at general conference in Salt Lake City, Brigham Young provided an answer: the Perpetual Emigration Fund (PEF). The PEF program provided loans to Saints from other parts of the world to travel to Zion. "The theory of the PEF was that voluntary donations would be secured from church members wherever located, and those benefited by the fund would continually replenish it after their arrival in the Valley."3

"SHOWER DOWN MEANS"

The impetus for this plan arose from the final general conference of the Church held in Nauvoo in 1845. At that time, the Saints were in the midst of severe trials. Many had been forced from their homes by Illinois mobs, and it was evident they would have to leave Nauvoo. Speaking at conference on October 6, 1845, Elder George A. Smith "observed that a revelation was given in Missouri in regard to the Saints consecrating their property." He noted the
saints did not understand what this fund was, but "the Lord in his providence caused it all to be consecrated, for they were compelled to leave it." He then noted that when the Saints left Missouri they "entered into a covenant not to cease their exertions until every saint who wished to go was removed." After Elder Smith concluded, "President Brigham Young moved that we take all the saints with us, to the extent of our ability, that is, our influence and property." The motion was seconded by Elder Heber C. Kimball and the Saints unanimously agreed. President Young then told the Saints: "If you will be faithful to your covenant, I will now prophesy that the great God will shower down means upon this people, to accomplish it [the resolution] to the very letter." Following the 184 general conference, the "Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company" was "duly incorporated and committees were appointed for the purpose of gathering means for this

**URGE ON EMIGRATION WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT, TELL THE PEOPLE NOT TO BE AFRAID OF THE PLAINS, BUT TO ENCOUNTER THEM WITH ANY KIND OF CONVENIENCE THAT THEY CAN PRO-CURE, WITH THEIR HANDCARTS, THEIR WHEEL BARROWS. AND COME ON FOOT, PACK AND ANIMAL, IF THEY HAVE ONE, AND NO OTHER WAY TO COME."
Gathering the Saints from Europe

Most of the American Saints who wanted to move to Zion were now there. The focus then shifted to bringing European converts to the Rocky Mountains. In England alone there were an estimated 30,000 Saints. Church leaders in the area were encouraged to use the PEF to help send these members to Zion. They were also asked to help select those with specific skills that could help build Mormon industry and commerce, like mechanics, blacksmiths, potters, textile makers, and metal workers. Saints were asked to bring the tools of their trades with them, and to encounter them with any kind of convenience that they can procure, with their handcarts, their wheel barrows. And come on foot, pack and animal, if they have one, and no other way to come. 11

Benson and Grant’s efforts to bring the rest of the Saints to the new Territory of Deseret proved successful. By 1852 almost all members were removed from the camps in Iowa and were relocated in Zion. A handful of Saints were left in a few settlements to help future emigrants on their way West.

A PEF Outfit

Emigrants were divided into three “companies” for the journey to Zion. The division was made by economics. Those who could pay their own way were placed in “cash” companies. Those who could pay a portion of their expenses were placed in L10 companies, and those whose entire expenses had to be met by the PEF were placed in the final company. Along with what emigrants could individually contribute, it was expected the PEF could send them to Zion for L10. Infants under one year could be sent for L5. In 1853, 2,312 people emigrated to Utah under the PEF. Of these, 955 paid their own way, 1,000 traveled in L10 companies, and 400 had all of their expenses met by the PEF. 14

Mormon emigrants left Liverpool and, before 1854, traveled by ship to New Orleans. From there they traveled up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. A riverboat would then take the Saints several hundred miles up the Mississippi River to where they would embark for the overland trip west. PEF agents met the emigrants at each major stop. They would provide housing, take care of those who were ill or unable to travel, and help the companies gather supplies for the next part of their journey. Because many Saints contracted malaria, cholera, or other river diseases, after 1853 ships from Europe were sent to New York, and emigrants traveled by rail to St. Louis or Omaha.

The PEF is a great example of planning and organization. When the emigrants arrived at their first camp, they found their “outfit” of one wagon, two yoke of oxen, two cows, and a tent waiting for them (emigrants helped economize by sewing their own tents). The cost of these “outfits” was between $250 to $500 in the 1850s. The PEF also provided food for each wagon of ten emigrants. In 1853 this included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,000 pounds of flour</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 pounds of sugar</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 pounds of bacon</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>50 pounds of rice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30 pounds of beans</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 pounds of dried apples and peaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 pounds of tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 gallon of vinegar</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 bars of soap</td>
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<td>25 pounds of salt</td>
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These provisions were expected to last the three months it usually took to get to the Salt Lake Valley. At times the emigrants might be able to supplement this diet with milk from their cows and wild game.15

THE PITFALLS OF THE PEF
During the mid-1850s, emigrants were supplied hand-carts rather than wagons. Thousands traveled to Utah this way at a much lower cost to the PEF. Handcart treks were obviously much more difficult for the Saints, and tragedy befell handcart pioneers, such as the Willie and Martin companies. One pioneer wrote, "A few more men died while we were camped in this place, but I don't know how many."16 The ten-month journey from Liverpool to Salt Lake could challenge both fortitude and faith.

After the coming of the railroad to Utah in 1869, European PEF emigrants traveled by rail from New York to Salt Lake City, a more expensive trip but one that saved a great deal of time and struggle.

Several thousand emigrants had arrived in Deseret by the mid-1850s thanks to the efforts of the PEF. However, the PEF was not without its problems. In April 1854, President Jedediah M. Grant asked at general conference: "How many of the brethren that are brought here by the Perpetual Emigrating Fund from England and other countries will keep the faith, and stay with the people of God, and do right? I am afraid not more than half."17 In 1872 Elder George A. Smith noted that the PEF brought apostates to Zion who had been awful, but that was their fault and not the Church's. Also, while many thousands used PEF to get to Utah, many were slow to repay their debt to the PEF — if they ever did.
In the October 1854 general conference, several of the Brethren spoke of the need to pay the debts to those who have helped them get to Zion. Elder George A. Smith stated, “There is no doubt but that a feeling of carelessness and indifference [exists among some] to bequeathing their debts to the Perpetual Emigration Fund for the assistance they have received.”

Elder Orson Pratt reminded Saints their PEF obligations were sacred and added that the PEF was one of the helps to assist Saints in “their weak and imperfect state” and “when the full law of God comes in force, these helps can be dispensed with.”

Interestingly, these comments were made just seven years after the Church arrived in the inhospitable Salt Lake Valley. During the 40 years it was in operation, church members were often challenged to increase their contributions to the PEF. Debts continued to rise, totaling $900,000 in 1867, for example. Thousands of Saints still wanted to use the PEF to emigrate to Zion. In October 1868 conference, at the beginning of one PEF fund-raising drive, Brigham Young told the Saints, “Now sisters, do as you did last year—save the money you usually spend in tea and coffee and ribbons, and let us have it to send for the poor.” In 1872 Elder George A. Smith asked all missionaries who had served in Europe to give generously each year to help those they had worked with make it to Deseret.

In 1880 the Church began its Jubilee Year. Like ancient Israel of Old, the Church wanted to forgive many of its debtors. That year over $1,604,000, including interest, was owed the PEF. “At the jubilee conference . . . one half of the debt was remitted in favor of the most worthy and needy of the assisted emigrants.”

By the 1880s, immigration to Zion began to decline. Economic conditions improved in Europe, and there was little available land left to colonize in the American West. Anti-Mormon legislation passed by the United States Congress also thwarted Mormon emigration. The Edmunds-Tucker Act, passed in 1887, abolished the PEF and prohibited the Utah Territorial Legislature from recognizing any corporation that sought to bring any emigrants to Utah. “The Edmunds-Tucker Act administered the coup de grace to the Mormon system of assisted immigration.”

The PEF, which began in fulfillment of sacred covenants to assist fellow Saints in need, may have had an ignominious end. However, its impact was profound and its effects everlasting. During its 38-year existence, it helped more than 100,000 people emigrate to Zion. Of those, 87,000 were from England and Northern Europe. These Saints greatly assisted in the colonizing of the Great Basin. They provided immeasurable strength and support to the growth of the Church and helped establish a vibrant foundation for Zion. ◄

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References:

5. Ibid., p. 464.
7. Ibid., p. 465.
10. Ibid., p. 77.
11. Ibid., p. 79.
12. Ibid., p. 97.
13. Ibid., p. 98.
15. Ibid., pp. 104, 105.
18. Ibid., 7:59.
19. Ibid., 2:57.
20. Ibid., 7:40.
22. Ibid., 12:300.
24. Ibid.