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Mormon Missionaries Say They Are Taken for C.I.A.

SALT LAKE CITY, Oct. 4 (AP) — Mormon missionaries abroad, traveling in pairs, clad in white shirts and black ties and wearing close-cropped hair, are being mistaken for agents of the Central Intelligence Agency.

"I was accused of being C.I.A.," said Floyd Rose, a former missionary in Spain who is now a student at the church's Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. "We were different than most Americans and some of the people really believed it." He said he was asked about the C.I.A. at least once every two weeks.

"People were always asking us," said Mike McQuain, another Brigham Young student. In France, he said, "People would ask us at doors and yell 'C.I.A.' at us as we went by."

Jeff Turley said the label was a standing joke among Mormon missionaries in Peru. Some, he said, would tease Peruvians by pretending to speak into a shoe or a buzzing digital watch.

Recruiting Good in Utah

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has more than 30,000 missionaries worldwide, denies any connection with the agency, which has done much recruiting in predominantly Mormon Utah.

This summer, the agency conducted a radio advertising campaign in Utah. Charles Jackson, an agency recruiter, said more than 100 replies came in.

Mr. Jackson said that the agency was looking for overseas case officers, intelligence analysts, scientists and computer specialists. The latter two categories present a problem because of competition from industry, he said.

"Utah is one of our good sources," said Jack Hansen, a C.I.A. recruiter based in Denver who is now working at

Brigham Young. The school's student newspaper, The Daily Universe, is running the agency's job advertisements.

Many young Mormon men spend two years in missionary activity. Brigham Young records indicate that about 6,700 of the university's 26,000 students are former missionaries.

Placements Have Been Successful

"We've never had any trouble placing anyone who has applied to the C.I.A.," said Dr. Gary Williams, head of the school's Asian Studies Department.

He said that former Mormon missionaries had three qualities the agency desired: foreign language ability, training in a foreign culture and experience living in a foreign country. He added: "Our Mormon culture has always been more supportive of the Government than American culture as a whole."

In the late 1960's and 1970's, when there was negativism on many university campuses about the agency and other Government units, the church continued to encourage students to accept jobs in public service.

Dr. Williams said that a sense of conformity and respect for authority which Mormons learn as missionaries, as well as their abstinence from drugs or alcohol, might appeal to the C.I.A. However, he said that the experience could be disillusioning for some. He said that many former students found that they were stuck in a Washington office, translating newspaper articles.

A prominent Mormon missionary who worked for the C.I.A. but did not like it is Neal Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, the church's governing body. Mr. Maxwell said he had done economic analyses for the agency for about a year but left 30 years ago.

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Young Mormons leaving for missions have sometimes been asked by the agency to work for it concurrently, Dr. Williams said. But he said he did not know of anyone who had accepted the offer.