

ELDER JOSEPH L. WIRTHLIN

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I sincerely trust, my brethren and sisters, that the Lord will bless me with a generous portion of His Holy Spirit during the moment or two I stand before you this morning.

I would that every member of this great congregation could have had the opportunity of attending the General Welfare meeting held yesterday morning and had visualized in picture, graph, and statistics the splendid achievements of this great movement and its possibilities for the future.

CHURCH WELFARE PROGRAM OF A PERMANENT NATURE

Some of us are inclined to believe that the Church Welfare program is of a temporary nature, but I do not hesitate in declaring that the future will hold a greater need for it than there has been in the past. In analyzing conditions in our great nation today, it is obvious that the matter of relief and unemployment is a local problem and sooner or later the Federal Government will turn it back to states, counties, cities, communities, and churches for solution.

The situation is clear. The Federal Government has before it two issues: first, as to whether or not it is able to carry the relief burden, or is the Federal income adequate to cover the huge expenditures of the past, present, and future. The present condition of the National Treasury indicates that disbursements are far in excess of receipts, which brings back to mind the truth expressed by President Clark, wherein he declared that no individual, nor private enterprise, nor even government can long exist on a sound financial basis when disbursements are greater than receipts. This local problem of relief which has and is being expanded into tremendous proportions by government agencies will come back to local units of government where it rightly belongs, or the nation faces bankruptcy.

Secondly, the Federal Government in turning the problem of relief back to states, counties, cities, communities, and churches should set in motion through these local units preparation for the caring of those in distress. Where preparation is being made to meet this problem, there will be but little difficulty. But where no preparation has been made, suffering, difficulties, and bloodshed are not remote possibilities.

STOREHOUSES TO BE BUILT

The Welfare Program is not the child of any individual's brain, but comes to us from our Heavenly Father. Your attention is directed to a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the year 1832, as recorded in the 78th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 3:

For verily I say unto you, the time has come and is now at hand;
and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of

my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion.

In this revelation there are indicated to us two important points, probably three. First, these storehouses are to be regulated and established by an organization of the Lord's people. Secondly, a storehouse was to be set up in "this" place. What place? The place where the Saints were residing in 1832—in and about Kirtland, Ohio. Third, the Lord said to the Prophet Joseph, "and in the land of Zion."

In the wisdom of the Lord and through the power of inspiration, the Presidency of the Church some four years ago instituted this plan in greater measure than before. As a result, there have been established in the land of Zion storehouses under the direction and regulation of an organization of the Lord's people. These storehouses are found in Canada, the Northwest, California, and in every Stake of the Church. This impresses us with the fact that this is not a new plan, but rather the first one revealed to us through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith. This is one of the Lord's ways of taking care of his people in distress.

PRAISE FOR WELFARE WORKERS

As one phase of this organization there has recently been organized in the Church the General Welfare Committee, who under mandate of the First Presidency have been and are establishing the Church Welfare Program of the Church. The efforts of this group of men are of the highest order. This Committee is composed of men from the various walks and vocations of life; some of them are professional men, others business men, others educators. For the past four years they have given most generously of their time and talents in the attempt to establish in every Ward, Stake, and Region of the Church the Lord's way of caring for His distressed people.

It is literally a day of preparation, and the members of the General Welfare Committee are exerting every effort to emphasize the necessity of being fully prepared in Priesthood quorums, Wards, Stakes, and Regions in order that this plan shall operate most efficiently in solving the problems of relief and unemployment.

Another great organization stands out in bold relief in connection with this movement, namely the Relief Society organization, which has contributed willingly, freely, and generously of its time and resources to the program. If it had not been for the Relief Society organization, in some Stakes the Welfare program would have made but little progress.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

This plan anticipates not only that men and women shall be rehabilitated in their temporal affairs, but that there shall be a rejuvenation and rehabilitation in their attitude towards God, towards their Government, and towards work.

The past experiences of a great many charitable institutions and organizations prove, where assistance has been given without placing any requirements or obligation upon the recipients, it has brought about a condition of demoralization, disrespect for government, and the attitude that the world owes man a living without any mental or physical exertion on his part. In such instances, when relief is taken away, such individuals are not able through desire or training to take care of themselves. The Church Welfare Program solves the problem of demoralization by placing on every individual the responsibility of contributing of his time and talents on some worthwhile project that there may be instilled in his mind and heart the thought that what he has received is his, by right of having earned it. The Lord has placed this obligation on all. He said, "Thou shalt not be idle, for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer." This is the essence and battle-cry of this great program of rehabilitation and preparation against the day of need, which will surely come.

On the other hand, those of us who are not particularly affected by the conditions of the times temporally have a most definite responsibility in that we should be susceptible to the lessons of this great program: First, the lesson of thrift, wherein through the practice of conservative and careful principles, we shall safeguard our private resources against days of future need and depression.

THE FAST OFFERING PLAN

The matter of financing this great program rests squarely upon the shoulders of members of the Church. The means and ways of such financing come from divine sources, for the Lord has indicated His desires relative to taking care of those who are in need. The Lord's method of financing the Church Welfare Program is the Fast Offering Plan, which has already been mentioned by Elder George F. Richards and Elder Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of the Twelve. This is a plan pregnant with enriching blessings for those who observe it, the most equitable and orderly system ever given to man whereby individuals contribute according to their resources: To abstain from two meals on the first Sunday of each month, the equivalent in cash or commodities to be presented to the Bishop in order that there might be provisions in the storehouse of the Lord for any who might be hungry or cold. This plan provides a blessing for the donor. It is a physical sacrifice for the receiving of a spiritual blessing. It places the body under subjection to the will of the Lord, establishes closer relationship between man and the Holy Ghost, which assures a high degree of spirituality, a blessing so much needed in the world today. It creates a prayerful attitude and provides an opportunity, as Paul declared, for the practice of pure and undefiled religion, in visiting the fatherless and the widows, and keeping themselves unspotted from the sins of the world. By far the greatest spiritual blessing derived from the observance of this plan is the gift of testimony. No greater privilege is offered to the

membership of this Church than the one afforded the first Sunday of each month to contribute of our resources to those who are in distress, to pray and fast, and to bear testimony of the goodness of the Lord unto us.

The spirit of testimony is the power of the Holy Ghost. Any individual who rises to his feet and declares that he knows that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Joseph Smith is a Prophet, does so under the power and influence of the Holy Ghost. Brigham Young declared that no man could testify that Jesus was the Christ only by and through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The temporal side of the Fast offering plan is so practical, equitable, and just that it places no undue burden on any individual be he rich or poor. It is interesting to note that the Fast offering per capita for the Church in 1925 was 22 cents. In 1939 it reached the all high of 82 cents. Remarkable progress has been made. But an analysis of the observance of the Fast offering plan proves we have hardly scratched the great field of possibilities in the Fast offering plan.

Considering the Fast offering per capita of 1938 based on abstaining from 24 meals a year gives us a meal cost of $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents. It is obvious that no meal can be served for $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents which contains a balanced and adequate diet. The United States army meal cost for this area averages from 13 cents to 17 cents per meal. The quartermaster department of the United States army is a careful buyer. It buys the best. It buys as closely as it can, and yet meal costs average from 13 cents to 17 cents.

One of the largest hospitals in Salt Lake City serves fifteen hundred meals daily, or forty-five thousand per month at an average cost of 20 cents per meal. It is safe to assume that the average family meal should cost at least 15 cents. This cost does not pertain to the Church as a whole, as there are families where meal costs run from 30 cents to 40 cents. But for the sake of comparison, we may use a meal cost of 15 cents. If we abstained from two meals monthly at the rate of 15 cents per meal, this would make a per capita of 30 cents per month, or \$3.60 per year, approximately four and one-half times as much as was contributed in 1939. Supposing the entire membership of the Church were to fully observe the Fast offering plan as revealed to us by the Lord, abstaining from two meals per month, there would be available annually a Fast offering sum of \$2,880,000. On the other hand, may we assume that only 500,000 members of the Church observe the Fast offering plan, based on the cost of 15 cents per meal, two meals each month or, a per capita of \$3.60 per year, this would provide an annual fund of \$1,800,000. With this amount available in the Wards, Stakes, and Regions of the Church, the Welfare Program would go forward by leaps and bounds. In addition thereto, many more new work projects would be inaugurated. It would be possible to assist in the establishment of industries which would utilize the dormant resources of this state and bring into gainful employment hundreds of our brothers and sisters.

Aside from all of the possibilities of providing adequate relief and employment for our people, the finest opportunity provided for the Church is that of leadership in a world floundering and gradually burying itself in the sea of distress, poor leadership, and destruction.

LOVE FOR GOD SHOWN BY SERVICE

We declare a love for God with all our hearts, minds, and souls. We know definitely that in our hearts a love for neighbors should exist, but love of God is only genuine, heartfelt, and real when actual service is rendered to our Father's children, our neighbors. The Apostle John declared: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. If a man saith he loves me and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

God's revealed plan for the caring of the unfortunate neither bankrupts nations, states, communities, churches nor individuals, but builds them up in faith and service to mankind. Love for God and love for neighbor will hasten the day when the King of kings shall rule and all men shall be equal.

In the 78th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord again declares to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things.

For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things;

For if ye will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

True it is that the Lord has required baptism of us, work for the dead and all other ordinances and principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but He requires above all else that we shall love Him and love His children, our neighbors, by rendering a service which will provide temporal and spiritual rehabilitation.

THE WORDS OF THE SAVIOR

May God bless and so strengthen us that when the day of accounting comes, each one of us may stand before a resurrected Savior to give an account of our stewardship; and may He say unto us, "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him saying, 'Lord when saw we Thee an hungered and took Thee in, or naked and clothed Thee; or when saw we Thee sick or in prison and came unto Thee?' And then shall the King answer and say unto them, 'Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"

May the Lord bless us, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.