

are nine of them) to be good enough to let us hear from them. We want to hear from all of them, and that I take it will give them about six minutes apiece. I am sorry, but I do not know what else to do about it.

## ELDER MARVIN O. ASHTON

### *First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

**P**RESIDENT CLARK'S concern in the short time left and the number of us yet to be heard from, reminds us we must be brief. A minister in his efforts to impress his good people with the miraculous in nature observed in his talk this particular Sunday that in every blade of grass there was a sermon. The following Saturday one of the boys of the parish found the minister cutting his lawn. In greeting his spiritual adviser the boy exclaimed, "Reverend, I am sure glad to see you cutting your sermons short." I shall make you happy in making my sermon short.

Will you please have your thinking machinery shift gears into the realm of temporal affairs? The temporal problems are the responsibilities of the Presiding Bishopric, and to be frank with you we don't blush in reminding you of them from time to time. In quoting Joseph Smith, I was interested in what Brother Marion Romney had to say about the temporal and the spiritual things of the Church. The Prophet observed that the man who could make an intelligent demarkation would be a very wise man. Brethren, in living our religion, we just can't get away from the temporal things. They "smack us in the eye," so to speak, everywhere we go, and if we hope to have our thinking on terra firma, we've got to meet fairly and squarely our stewardship. We brethren assembled here tonight are the directors of this great Church corporation, of course, keeping in mind that the bishops working with us are influenced and guided, if you please, by our attitude and instructions. Some people are so constituted that even common sense must be reinforced with chapter and verse. For their benefit, here we go: "And even the bishop, who is a judge, and his

counselors, if they are not faithful in their stewardship shall be condemned, and others shall be planted in their stead." (D. & C. 64:40)

Please keep in mind that you have fifteen hundred buildings in this Church. If you put an average value of twenty thousand dollars on each, the minimum value of Church property is at least thirty million dollars. I dare say your cost of replacement would be nearer one hundred million dollars. Now don't forget this depreciation business. Still using the minimum figure: one percent depreciation is three hundred thousand dollars per year; two percent or the figure used by the government in the most substantial construction will be six hundred thousand dollars per year. If you depreciate those buildings five percent, as the neglect some buildings get will indicate, (and that isn't fiction) your depreciation per year would be one million five hundred thousand dollars.

I ask you who is the "watch dog" of the treasury? Is he only that fellow who writes out the checks? Is he only the one who watches the gates of the Church vaults? In a big sense the "watch dogs" are those who are the custodians of our Church buildings. Don't forget it. "A stitch in time saves nine." "Trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle."

I brought over with me today a board panel with some evidences of mistakes wired thereon. Like other sins, here are displayed evidences of sins of omission and sins of commission. Don't forget, one spark will burn up a million dollars of the hardest earned money in the world. When you take a fuse plug and insert a penny therein, or twist the brass so it laps over the contact in the center, that is a sin of commission. Yes, only a little thing, but the spark may send smoke to the skies of our

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people's hard earned savings. Our people take the skin off their hands in the sacrifices they make, and plain carelessness burns up in a minute the results of such sacrifices. That fuse plug is so constructed as to make for you a night watchman to guard your property when you are asleep. He makes your absence from home safe from fire. Yet in some of these sins of commission you take a six shooter, as it were, and pick him off. Yes, you kill the guard that protects your home.

We have asked you to install at a cost of twenty-one dollars a low water cut-off in your boiler. Some of you won't. We ask you to test the water in your boilers to save corroding, but you won't. Right while we talk, the good people of a little ward who can't dig down any more will have to raise nine hundred dollars to replace a boiler because some one blundered in a detail we are talking about—a little sin of commission. In this boiler was inserted a leadlike substance as a plug which, when subjected to extra heat, would melt and automatically shut off the furnace. What did he do? He plugged the hole with a hickory stick—a sin of commission here. In some chapels we have found the controls and safety appliances wired down, and maybe two hundred little children on the floor just over this danger of explosion, they and their devoted teachers in oblivion of the "dynamite" they are hovering over. If you want to get some faith-promoting stories, just follow us around to some of the Church buildings and see how the Lord has His arm around us. Keeping in mind our carelessness, if the Lord didn't have His arms around us, we'd have a hundred fires a year.

We are still talking about the temporal things. The lives of our people are at stake. I don't care whether you place the Church property at thirty million dollars or one hundred million dollars, we are reminded in a big way that we are the watch dogs of the treasury. A custodian is either too lazy or he doesn't know how to clean the

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ashes out of his stoker, and a sacrificing handful of people have to dig down in their pockets for three hundred dollars for a new stoker.

Another ward has to meet a bill of six hundred dollars for a new boiler because the custodian failed to go to the expense of ten cents worth of labor and five cents for a postage stamp in the examination of the water in his boiler.

A keeper of a ward's property won't clean out the old rags from the basement and thirty thousand dollars honest-to-goodness toil and sacrifice goes up in smoke.

The skies of the most beautiful hamlet in our country are darkened by the smoke of a fifty thousand dollar beautiful edifice and contents because the bishop would not take counsel as to how easily fires are started by defective wiring.

It is like the Irishman who cut off one of his fingers in the rip saw and was showing his friends how he did it. While demonstrating, he had to exclaim, "Gee, there goes another one." Yes, brethren, while we are talking, there goes another meetinghouse up in smoke.

Now you stake presidents, we have asked you to appoint a member of your high council to be the point of contact between our office and the wards of your stake. If you haven't done so, please appoint him now and give us his name and address.

I do want to say this before I sit down: We compliment most of you men on the way you are teaming with us. There are some of you who don't. We don't know why; when we visit your places, we just don't understand; we can't understand it. As Bishop Richards said today, climate doesn't determine what your stake is going to be. It is initiative. We keep crying and crying to have some of these things taken care of, and they are not.

May the Lord bless us in our responsibilities, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.