

## GENERAL AUXILIARY OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

## RELIEF SOCIETY

Belle Smith Spafford, President  
 Marianne Clark Sharp, First Counselor  
 Velma N. Simonsen, Second Counselor  
 with all members of the Board as at present constituted

## DESERET SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

George R. Hill, General Superintendent  
 David Lawrence McKay, First Assistant Superintendent  
 Lynn S. Richards, Second Assistant Superintendent  
 with all members of the Board as at present constituted

## YOUNG MEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Elbert R. Curtis, General Superintendent  
 A. Walter Stevenson, First Assistant Superintendent  
 David S. King, Second Assistant Superintendent  
 with all members of the Board as at present constituted

## YOUNG WOMEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Bertha S. Reeder, President  
 Emily H. Bennett, First Counselor  
 LaRue C. Longden, Second Counselor  
 with all members of the Board as at present constituted

## PRIMARY ASSOCIATION

LaVern W. Parmley, President  
 Arta M. Hale, First Counselor  
 Florence H. Richards, Second Counselor  
 with all members of the Board as at present constituted

**President J. Reuben Clark, Jr:**

President McKay, so far as I could see the voting was unanimously in the affirmative, with no negative votes cast.

**President David O. McKay:**

You have just heard President Clark of the First Presidency present the

General Authorities, General Officers, and General Auxiliary Officers of the Church. We thank you, brethren and sisters, for your unanimous vote in the affirmative.

Our first speaker will be Elder Ezra T. Benson of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Stapley of the Council of the Twelve.

## ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**M**Y BELOVED brethren and sisters, in deep humility I pray for the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit and for an interest in your faith and prayers.

I have rejoiced in this great conference of the Church and kingdom of God. My soul has echoed approval to every-

thing that has been said and done. I am grateful for my testimony of this great latter-day work, proud to be a part of it, grateful to see the great progress that is being made as it moves forward in the accomplishment of its great mission.

With you, I thrilled at the opening

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address of our beloved President, David O. McKay, a great message of hope, love, and encouragement. I was happy to have him refer to his visit abroad, and I was pleased that Brother Stayner Richards filled in a few of the gaps which President McKay left unfilled because of his sweet modesty.

My thoughts have been turned back a few years to a glorious, yet trying, but profitable year spent abroad. Not only through these first two addresses, but also through the singing of the German Saints in our sessions on Saturday, my thoughts have been turned to the hazardous, but never-to-be-forgotten year 1946 spent in Europe.

I have lived again, my brethren and sisters, months spent among these wonderful people in our missions in Europe. I shall ever be grateful to the First Presidency and my Brethren for the rich opportunity which was mine, and I am grateful to the Saints for the great lessons which they taught me. I shall ever be indebted to them for the blessings that came to me because of my association with them.

As I listened to the singing of our German-speaking choir, I thought of the first time I heard the Saints singing in war-torn, occupied Europe. In the city of Karlsruhe, where we had gone to try to attend a conference of the Saints, we had difficulty finding the meeting place. We had to leave our car blocks away because of the rubble that filled the streets until there was only a narrow path. Finally when we sighted the partially bombed building, we heard the strains of one of our great Latter-day Saint hymns.

I do not believe that "Come, Come, Ye Saints" ever stirred the souls of the Pioneers more deeply than it did that little party of missionaries as we approached that meeting of the Saints. I shall never forget looking into their upturned faces that Sabbath day. God bless them one and all!

I thought, too, of our visits to other cities—to Frankfurt, Frieberg, Hamburg, Hanover, and our first visit to Berlin. The three and one-half hour meeting

with the Saints in Berlin will never be forgotten, nor shall I forget my feelings as we looked into the faces of refugees who had come across country on foot from Poland—people half-starved, with all their earthly belongings on their backs, and yet with the light of truth and faith in God shining in their eyes.

I shall never forget some of the accounts that were related of the hardships which had been endured by members of the Church in Germany and in Austria, way up in Norway, in Holland and Finland, Denmark, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, England, and in other countries in Europe.

I remember, too, my brethren and sisters, when the first Church welfare supplies arrived in Berlin. I presume you have never had the great and trying experience of looking into the faces of people who are starving when you are unable to give them even a crust of bread. We faced that as we first met with the Saints in parts of Europe.

But when the welfare supplies came, it was a time never to be forgotten by these faithful Saints. I can see them now in tears, weeping like children, as they looked upon those first boxes of welfare supplies when they reached occupied Germany.

I have recalled also during this conference, driving through the cities, through the streets, down the once most beautiful street of *Unter den Linden* and looking over at the once beautiful *Tiergarten* in Berlin. I remember the Saints pointing out the Kaiserhof Hotel, in ruins, where President Grant and President Clark had stopped when they visited in Germany, and also the destruction of government and university buildings. Yes, I have recalled driving through the industrial Ruhr, once the pride of a great nation but now blasted and silent as death.

I thought, too, this morning and during the conference of our visit to Poland, into the city of Warsaw by freight plane, our meeting with the Saints down in Breslau, recently taken over by the

Polish nation under the direction of the communists.

I remembered our meeting with the Saints way up in East Prussia, near the Russian border, Saints who had known slave labor, who had suffered indescribable privation and hardship, worse than death, and yet whose faith and whose testimonies were still burning brightly.

I recalled visiting the great centers of destruction, where under the rule of the powerful despot and dictator, hundreds of thousands of human beings have been slaughtered as evidenced by piles of human ashes. In Dachau alone, there were 138,000 destroyed, and this but a small part of some twenty million total who had been brutally slaughtered.

I remember, my brethren and sisters, great tracts of once fertile and productive land lying idle. The anomaly of land idle, and people starving because there was no seed to plant, no machinery with which to plant, cultivate, and harvest, and no power because power machinery had been destroyed and horses had been killed during the bombing and many others killed and eaten for human's food! All these and many other things have passed through my mind the last few days as we have been assembled here in conference.

The aftermath of the war is usually worse than the actual physical combat. Everywhere there is the suffering of old people, innocent women and children. Economies are broken down, the spirits of people crushed, men and women bewildered and a spirit of frustration prevails. It is a saddening thing to see people who have lost their freedom—the right to choose—who have lost their right to move about freely, to assemble together as we meet here today. I recalled, too, the sin and corruption, the immorality and the starvation that always follow war.

As a result of witnessing these conditions, there came a deep feeling of gratitude in my heart for enduring faith and an appreciation to our faithful Saints for the lessons which they taught me. I came to have a new appreciation for some of our principles

and teachings because of the devotion and example of these good people.

I came to love the Word of Wisdom more than ever before, as I saw its effects in the lives of our people. I saw them get their limited rations, in some of which there would be a small quantity of tobacco. Then the Saints would trade that small quantity for more food, while those with the tobacco habit would trade their limited amount of food for more tobacco even at the risk of starvation. I feel sure that many of the Saints are, no doubt, alive and well today because of their acceptance and living of this simple, and I think often unappreciated, law of health given to the Saints through the goodness of the Lord.

I saw people whose craving for drugs and stimulants had been intensified because of hunger. Men and women offering to sell their clothing, to barter their children's food, and in some cases to surrender their own bodies for immoral purposes in order to satisfy the craving for cigarets.

I have here an excerpt from an article by Louis Hagen, correspondent for the London *Sunday Express*, who had reported on conditions in 1946, in Germany particularly. This article is entitled, "How the Cigaret Rules Germany." He states:

At times they have become quite maniacal, selling their children's food, their belongings, and even themselves to get cigarets. One cannot possibly imagine the length to which people who lack tobacco will go to get a smoke. It is far worse than hunger. If you are hungry and smoke, you don't feel so hungry. But hunger intensifies tenfold the desire to smoke. Most German people are usually hungry.

If anyone thinks that Germany is not yet punished sufficiently, they might suggest the withdrawal of all cigarets. That would be worse than any other punishment that could be devised.

We stood on the street corners of some of the cities in the occupied areas and watched men literally fight for a cigaret butt flipped into the streets by American soldiers. We saw mothers stand on the

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street corners and direct their little daughters down the sidewalks to pick up cigaret stubs thrown out of jeeps and other military vehicles and bring them back while those mothers stood on the street corners and smoked.

Yes, the Saints taught me a new appreciation for the Word of Wisdom. They taught me also a deeper appreciation for this intangible thing we refer to as a testimony—this thing that provides an anchor for men and women during times of great stress, trial, and hardship, yes, a testimony that brings peace to the soul even during times of war and struggle and hardship, that gives hope to the weary, and the depressed. Yes, a testimony that brings great power into the hearts of men and women during their darkest hours.

This is one of the peculiarities of this great people—the Latter-day Saints—a personal, individual testimony. I saw people peacefully happy in their hearts, while standing amidst the ruins all around them. I heard people bear testimonies to the goodness of the Lord unto them, although they were the sole remaining member of a once prosperous and happy family, the others all destroyed in the great struggle. Yet their spirits were sweet. They thanked God for the knowledge that was theirs and the assurance they had that some day in the Providence of God they would be reunited with their loved ones.

I came to know, my brethren and sisters, through the lives of our Saints abroad, that men and women who have a testimony of this work can endure anything which they may be called upon to endure and still keep sweet in spirit.

The Saints in Europe taught me a new appreciation for the priesthood of God. I heard them bear testimony of their gratitude for the priesthood in their homes. Many families who had been isolated from other representatives of the priesthood during the bombing and during sickness told of their gratitude that they had in their homes the authority and the power to lay their hands

upon members of their families, and under the inspiration of heaven invoke God's healing power upon them.

My brethren and sisters, this is a priceless blessing. I heard them speak of their gratitude that in their homes, while isolated from the rest of the members of the mission, they were able to administer the sacred emblems. Yes, even at times when they did not have bread, they used potatoes or potato peelings as the emblem but had the sacrament administered to members of their own household.

Oh, my brethren of the priesthood, no honor that will ever come to any of us conferred by men of the world, or any man-made honorable body, will ever approach in importance the great honor and blessing which came to us the day we were ordained to the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood. This is a priceless blessing, an eternal blessing, and I hope and pray that we will honor it all the days of our lives.

Wealth, power, position, are as nothing, by comparison, to the honor and blessing which comes through the priesthood of the Living God. I know that many of our brethren today are facing responsibilities as we go to the polls. Many of them will be elected to legislative bodies; others will be chosen as chief executives in municipalities, to positions of trust in counties and states. We honor you because of your interest in political affairs, and we have confidence that you will always remember that no political power or office which may ever come to you will even approach in importance the great blessing and honor which came to you when you were ordained to the Holy Priesthood of God.

I thank the Saints abroad because they gave to me a deeper appreciation for the blessings of the holy temples. Sometimes, my brothers and sisters, I feel that we take these blessings largely for granted. Sometimes we live almost under the eaves, in the shade of the temple, and fail to take advantage of the priceless blessings that are available to us in the House of the Lord. The

richest blessings of this life and of eternity are tied up with these sacred ordinances.

When I heard and saw the yearning in the hearts of the Saints that they might some day go to the temple and have open to them the richest blessings known to men and women in this world, I got a new appreciation of the blessings which we have available to us in these sacred buildings. I rejoice in my heart in the announcement of the First Presidency that a temple will be constructed in Switzerland. It is an answer to a prayer of years in my heart that some day temples might be erected close to those devoted Saints in Europe. I hope and pray that some day temples will be built in other parts of the world.

Many of the Saints would give their all if they could just enter the House of the Lord and have those sacred ordinances performed.

I remember one lovely old lady, a devoted sister that I met in a meeting of the Saints way down in Vienna, Austria. She was a little old lady, faithful and true. She had been ostracized by her people, by her community. She had been thrown into prison because she failed to bow at the feet of the man who at one time was the minister of her church. She endured hardships; she had been in a concentration camp; and after much struggle and effort on the part of the members of her family here in Zion, and members of Congress from Idaho and Utah, she finally arrived in Zion. When I saw her in a little community up in southeastern Idaho, she expressed, through her daughter, because she could not speak English, her gratitude for her arrival in Zion, and then she added:

"The American doctors do not give me much hope that I'll ever be strong again. I have been starved so long, they say." Then her face lighted up and she added, "But it doesn't matter, just so long as I get strong enough to go up to Idaho Falls or down to Logan and go through the temple. Then I am ready to go."

I am grateful to the Saints for the lessons which they taught me while I mingled among them. My brethren and sisters, may we appreciate the blessings which are ours. May we realize that all these material things are but a means to an end. We are but stewards here in mortality. God will hold us accountable for the use of the material things with which he has blessed us. Let us ever remember that the end is spiritual.

May we, as individual members of the Church, realize that all of our blessings come from above. May we be true to our covenants. May we live the gospel. May we appreciate the blessings of the Word of Wisdom, the priesthood of God, the blessings of the House of the Lord, and the priceless blessings of a personal testimony of the divinity of this work.

May God bless us to this end, I humbly pray as I add my testimony to those borne, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder Delbert Leon Stapley of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Clifford E. Young, one of the Assistants to the Twelve.

## ELDER DELBERT L. STAPLEY

### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**M**Y BROTHERS AND SISTERS—I have rejoiced in the spiritual messages of this conference. My faith has been stimulated. I have resolved to be more devoted and more diligent in my

service to the Master. I do not want to take much time this afternoon, and the things that I had thought of saying, I think I shall reserve for some future time.