

PRESIDENT STEPHEN L RICHARDS

First Counselor in the First Presidency

I BELIEVE, my brethren, we have cause for encouragement. Listening to the report of the Church made by President McKay at the opening of the Conference, and the various other items which have been mentioned, I believe that we should feel optimistic about the progress of our work. I do. I think that we are going forward, and I have confidence and faith that we will meet all the problems and situations which arise.

I thank the Lord always for the principle of continuous revelation. I thank him that he has made provision for his Spirit to attend all of those who are called to preside in his work, and I speak not only of the General Authorities, but those who are charged with the responsibility of presidency in the stakes and the wards, in the quorums, in the missions, in the temple, and in all of our organizations.

I am a firm believer in improvement. I think improvement is the law of life, and I am grateful that we are not so controlled by practices and conditions of the past that we are not open to the consideration of ways and means to advance the Kingdom of our Father.

I remember hearing a president of one of our stakes illustrate the point. One of the sister workers in an organization of the stake said to him, because he was a pretty hard-driving president, "President, it seems that you are never satisfied." "O, yes I am," he said, "I am always satisfied that you can do better." And so I am persuaded that such new methods as present themselves and come regularly through the proper channels will be conducive to the upbuilding of our Father's work. We have evidences of it. I might submit some of the figures to attest this, but time will not permit tonight. The whole picture looks to me to be one of encouragement, one to give us cause for great gratitude in the assurance

that the blessings of the Lord have been upon us.

Now there are opportunities for further perfecting our work, and those opportunities rest in large measure with our presiding brethren. I would like to say just a word to the presidencies of quorums. These quorums of priesthood, as you are all aware, are designated of the Lord. They are substantially the only organizations among us, other than that of the general organization of the Church, which have been specifically mentioned in the revelations. The Lord must have set great store by these marvelous institutions which he created. He knew in the beginning that his priesthood would be the basic foundation of his work. I was thinking tonight if Joseph and those associated with him in the beginning of the work could witness what we see tonight, this great demonstration of power, resident within God's Holy Priesthood, and perhaps they do see it, how gratified they would be.

And here is a great reservoir of power to be utilized for the advancement of our Father's Kingdom. Upon the quorums rests the largest measure of that responsibility. I am persuaded that no other organization can or ought to take their place, because they constitute the Lord's grouping of the manpower of his Church. Upon the presidencies of quorums rests the responsibility of seeing that their quorums function properly.

We used to have years and years ago, when the Priesthood Committee of the Church was first organized; many may remember it; President McKay will, a very concise and comprehensive definition of a quorum. We used to say it is three things: A class, a fraternity, and a service unit. And so we sought to group around these headings the responsibilities of the men of the quorum. And while there has grown out of the orig-

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inal concept a more elaborate organization, I am persuaded that if we could make our quorums serve the functions indicated by those three things we should accomplish much for the members and for the Church.

I am thoroughly persuaded that we can learn the Gospel in our quorums, and thus comply with the revelation that men are "to learn their duties." When men profess that some of the courses of study are a little intricate and difficult, I think of the days in Kirtland when a few men of meager learning and education had what seems to be the effrontery and boldness to set about to learn Hebrew, and you will recall how in the School of the Prophets, they engaged a Professor Seixas to teach them Hebrew in order that they might the better interpret God's word. We can learn. We can learn by study. We can learn the fundamental things that we need to know as members of God's Holy Priesthood. And we can learn about the apostasy, which is essential for us to understand in order that we comprehend in its fulness the restoration and be fortified to defend the restoration in the latter days.

And I take the liberty of urging you men, through your quorum presidencies, to see to it that your teachers study, that they receive the instruction which is provided for them, and the facilities which have been maintained in order to give them a concept of these great truths and to teach them intelligently to those who come to the classes. The more we make our classes worth while to the members, the more readily will they come, and the greater the value they will receive from them.

Now, I don't know that it is possible for any organization to succeed in the Church under the priesthood without adopting the genius of our Church government. What is that? As I conceive it, the genius of our Church government is government through councils. The Council of the Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, the Council of the Stake Presidency, or quo-

rum, if you choose to use that word, the Council of the Bishopric, and the quorum of Council of the Quorum Presidency. I have had enough experience to know the value of councils. Hardly a day passes but that I see the wisdom, God's wisdom, in creating councils: to govern his Kingdom. In the spirit under which we labor, men can get together with seemingly divergent views and far different backgrounds, and under the operation of that spirit, by counseling together, they can arrive at an accord, and that accord, (the occasions are so negligible as not to be mentioned) and therefore I say that accord is always right. That accord represents the wisdom of the council, acting under the Spirit.

Now, brethren of priesthood quorum presidencies: You need those councils, and I have no hesitancy in giving you the assurance, if you will confer in council as you are expected to do, God will give you solutions to the problems that confront you with reference to your quorums. And he will enable you to find ways and means of approaching the men whom you would like to reach to bring them into accord with your quorum, and have them enjoy its spirit. I am sure we can go out and get many of these men. My heart is always troubled for the unusually large number of our elders who do not ally themselves with the quorum and secure the spirit and the benefit to be had therefrom. I am not at all persuaded that these are bad men, but I am persuaded that they are negligent often and forgetful and neglectful, and they need your care. And the quorum presidency, no matter how many committees you appoint, the quorum presidency is responsible for every man in the quorum; and I am sure you cannot be relieved of that responsibility, although you will want the help of all those who may come to your assistance.

And I am persuaded too that if you approach many of these men in frankness and true friendship, you will touch their hearts. I have long been persuaded

that it is something of a waste of time to go to a man's home who has been neglectful and spend the time in talking about the weather or the crops or politics or something else.

I always admired my dear brother, the President of the Church, George Albert Smith. I have been with him on many occasions. I have seen him meet many old friends, and I frequently have seen him take their hand, and ask the first question, not how are you getting along, which usually means how much money are you making, but "How are you feeling in the Church?" I have seen him ask that of business men. I have been with him on the streets of this city and had him meet a business man and say, "Well, how are you feeling in the Church?" It was a direct approach, and one usually that brought a response that probably made the man search his conscience, and that is what we need to do with these men, to get them to search their own conscience, and make their own decisions to avail themselves of these glorious opportunities that we bring to them.

Now, my brethren, I recognize that I can't deal with many problems tonight. There is one problem that President McKay suggested that I mention to you about the missionaries, and I fully endorse all that has been said about that great work, and that is, brethren, that we still think it wise to use some caution in the general advertising of missionary farewells. I don't need to take the time to tell you the rather strenuous period we have been through in trying to arrange for our missionary program. It has not been easy. Thank the Lord it is now operating in good measure and producing results, but it has not been easy; and for the time being, it is suggested that you follow the directions

that were issued sometime ago to avoid newspaper advertising of our missionary farewells. Times may change, and this instruction may change.

I just want to bear my testimony to the divinity of this great power that you and I hold. I know that it is genuine. I know that it is authentic. I have no more question about its authenticity and its derivation than I have of any other fact established by the most concrete evidence we could ask. Sometimes there are those who when I have laid my hands upon their head in ordination have asked me for the derivation of my priesthood. I repeat four steps: I was ordained by President Joseph F. Smith. He was ordained by President Brigham Young. Brigham Young was ordained by the three witnesses, one of whom was Oliver Cowdery, and that ordination was subsequently confirmed by the Prophet. Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith were ordained by angelic ministers from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. We don't have to go into antiquity to establish the authenticity and the genuineness of this power that we hold, and you and I know, that aside from the evidences of its authentic derivation, we know that there is an essence within it which makes it more than a mere name. I have felt it and you have. I know that our Father has given it to his men and boys to establish his work. God help us to use it effectively in the creation of a better world, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Thank you President Richards and President Clark.

We have received a report that by actual count and by report over the telephone from Provo and Logan, we have in attendance at this great Priesthood Meeting, 16,173 members.

PRESIDENT DAVID O. McKAY

MY DEAR FELLOW WORKERS: Just a few words in conclusion.

I commend the appeal made by Brother Petersen, and once again ask that

the bishops send the names to Elders Spencer Kimball and Mark E. Petersen of those girls and boys who leave their home towns to come to the centers.