

Friday, October 1

First Day

sultant peace among the nations—what a message!—and fourth, salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of our Father.

With all my soul I pray that the Lord will hasten the day when the influence of this divine organization will be felt more potently for the good of the inhabitants of the world, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Bishop Carl W. Buehner of the Presiding Bishopric will now address us, after which we shall hear from the Choir and congregation, "O Ye Mountains High."

Bishop Buehner of the Presiding Bishopric.

BISHOP CARL W. BUEHNER

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

AT A RECENT quarterly conference, a high councilman was invited to speak, and when he came to the pulpit he expressed the situation in these classic words: "Every time I stand up to speak my brain sits down." I have wondered what happens to me, but I think that describes it about as well as anything.

I hope, brothers and sisters, you will have a little prayer in your hearts for me, and for all those who are asked to participate in this great conference of the Church. I have been lifted and inspired by the powerful message of the President. I am sure we were all thrilled with the statistics given, to learn that we are making progress and that we are headed in the right direction. President McKay is an inspiration to everyone and I suppose the Number One missionary in the Church. He lifts people wherever he goes. I have often thought we might well adopt a new slogan in the Church—something to this effect: "Let's follow the Leader." We cannot follow him all over the world as he has traveled far and wide, but if we would show the same enthusiasm for the work that has been assigned to us, as he does for the work that is his, we would have even greater records in our Church.

I would like to say a few words this morning about another program of great magnitude in the Church that I have learned to love since I have been very close to it, and that is the ward teaching program. I would like to commend the leadership of the Church for the progress we have made in this activity. We are visiting more families than we have ever visited before. I

think the effectiveness of our messages in the homes are more impressive than they have ever been. This year our records indicate that we are visiting thirty thousand more homes every month than we visited a year ago. This is very commendable.

I feel this about ward teaching—that it is the one program in the Church that literally extends its arms around the entire Church. That other units only have the ministry of their particular organization, but if we do one hundred percent ward teaching, we will have a visit in the home of every member of the Church every month. In these days where there is great concern and many problems, I know of no finer program than to have two fine ward teachers visit and bless each home, leave a message of inspiration and encouragement, and invite the membership of the Church to attend the various meetings of the Church. It becomes, to me, the one organization that can get into every home in the Church every month.

What do you ward teachers find in the homes of the members of the Church? I have been a ward teacher. We enter homes where there is a wonderful spirit and a fine influence. We also visit homes where there are young men and women in the service of our country, others who are off in the mission fields of the Church. There are frequently young people away from home attending school. Parents are concerned about the temptations confronting these youngsters. We can bring cheer, consolation, and comfort, and make them feel good about the

wisdom and mission of these young people.

We find homes where there are now many economic difficulties, people in distress. These should be reported to the bishop. We find homes where there is illness. We find homes where there is not too much interest in the activities of the Church. We find homes where there is a little criticism toward the General Authorities of the Church, and even persons critical of some of the teachings of the Church. I want to tell you, brethren and sisters, ward teaching can perform a great mission as it gets into the homes of the members and brings a spirit of love and appreciation, of inspiration, of fellowship, and of invitation to join the activities of this great Church.

So, I have learned to love this program. I have learned to feel its strength. We have already heard this morning statistics indicating progress that has been made. I would like to feel that some of the success being achieved is due in a large measure to more effective ward teaching and because we are doing a better job by visiting more homes than ever before.

I remember some time ago Bishop LeGrand Richards announcing to the Church that any bishop should be ashamed who did not have at least twenty-five percent of his membership at sacrament meeting. We all thought this could not be done. What has happened? In the last few months we have had a Church average of as high as thirty-one percent; several months of thirty percent. Even in the summer-time when our activities have declined some, we have not had less than twenty-six percent.

Brethren, I have the same feeling toward this great program for senior Aaronic Priesthood groups in the Church. When it was announced that we should organize these men into priesthood quorums, we received protests from all over the Church claiming, "It cannot be done. We do not get enough of these men into our wards to even have a group."

This morning I would like to tell you that we have over 1600 quorums of senior members of the Aaronic Priest-

hood that we did not have before the program was announced to the Church. So these things can be done.

I appreciate, too, some of the faithful men who have worked in this program. There are those that you hear very little about. Recently at a quarterly conference one man came to me and said, "Bishop, I have been a ward teacher for sixty-two years." Sixty-two years! I thought that might be as long as anyone had been a ward teacher. We wrote a little article in the Church Section of the *Deseret News* following that information, asking if there had been any who had served longer, and if so we would like to hear from them. We got a letter back from a man who said, "I am now ninety-six years of age. I became a ward teacher when I was twelve. I have been a ward teacher for eighty-four years, and I have only missed one or two times in that entire period visiting my district."

Just a week or two ago I was in Ogden attending conference, and a man came to me and said, "I would like to tell you about my ward teaching companion. He has had a perfect record of ward teaching for seventy-five years. He has shaken hands with every President of the Church except the Prophet Joseph Smith." It was a real pleasure to have that man introduced to that entire quarterly conference audience and then to invite anyone to exceed that record.

Now brethren, can you do better than this man with eighty-four years teaching? Most of you cannot, you have not started early enough—but possibly we can get some of our Aaronic Priesthood boys to start at twelve, and if they live to be one hundred they might beat that record. There are great possibilities, great opportunities.

We heard another interesting experience of a man who had been stricken eight or nine years ago and was flat on his back in bed. As a matter of fact, he was so paralyzed that he could not even have the use of his fingers. He finally learned how to write a little by putting a pencil between his teeth. He became a ward teaching district supervisor, and he had to assist him, a blind man who was not even a member of the Church, but who

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was a very good friend of his. The story that we got in this letter was that during the time that this man has been the district supervisor in his ward, they have never had less than ninety percent of their families visited.

Then I heard another one from up in the Portland area. I saw a man in a wheel chair who had been brought in to every session of the conference. The stake president said, "I would like to introduce you to this man. He is a one hundred percent ward teacher."

When I shook hands with him and congratulated him, I said, "How do you do it?"

He said, "Well, I have to be carried into the homes. They have to carry me out again. I can wheel my chair from one home to the next, but it is a wonderful experience. I would not miss it for anything, and I just love to do my ward teaching."

Sometimes I think, brethren, somebody ought to break our ankles or our arms to help us appreciate the possibilities we have. I read the story of the two men down in the El Paso Stake who said they drive 120 miles every month to visit two families, but they always have one hundred percent ward teaching visits.

You hear stories like this wherever you go. I have heard men, when asked, "What are you doing in the Church?" say, "I am *only* a ward teacher," and I have said, "What do you mean by saying you are *only* a ward teacher? What you ought to do is swell up with pride and say, 'I am a ward teacher, and I am doing my teaching, and I am grateful to the bishop for the opportunity he has given me of serving in this great Church and kingdom.'"

I feel, brethren, that we have to feed the spiritual body just as we have to feed the physical body, if we want to

keep it alive, and here is a great opportunity to perform that service. I know some of us feel that we do not amount to very much, and I remind you of the story of the elephant and the mouse. You have probably heard it.

The two of them together crossed a rickety old bridge. When they got on the other side, the mouse looked up into the eyes of the elephant and said, "Boy, didn't we shake that bridge?"

Well now, maybe we are just the difference in what it takes to make this program shake, or make it go. Brethren, we express our appreciation and gratitude for what you have done. I hope you can see with us the great possibilities of getting into every home every month. We will strengthen this Church as it has never been strengthened before, and that is my testimony to you, and I bear it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Bishop Carl W. Buehner of the Presiding Bishopric has just concluded speaking.

The Choir and the Congregation will now sing one verse of "O Ye Mountains High," under the direction of Brother J. Spencer Cornwall.

Elder Hugh B. Brown will speak to us following the singing.

The Choir and congregation joined in singing the hymn, "O Ye Mountains High."

President David O. McKay:

Elder Hugh B. Brown will now speak to us, one of the Assistants to the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Mark E. Petersen, of the Council of the Twelve.

ELDER HUGH B. BROWN

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

MY DEAR brothers and sisters: Bishop Carl Buehner and I, being first to speak in this conference, are perhaps somewhat like two boys just coming out of the dentist's chair. We look

through our tears rather pityingly at those in the outer office who are waiting for their turn.

We have all been inspired this morning by the stirring appeal of our Presi-