

President Marion G. Romney

The assignment that I have for this meeting is to talk about the fundamentals of church welfare. I am sure you understand the fundamentals better after hearing Brother McConkie's address.

Self-reliance

At the base of Church Welfare is the commandment that we are to live *by our own labors*.

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground," the Lord said to our first parents (Gen. 3:19).

As we sift the ways of the world, let us reject the commonly accepted attitude of expecting the government to supply us with the necessities of life. This practice, if fully adopted, will change any society from one of freedom to one of slavery. Let us contend for the gospel of work. Let us be self-reliant. Salvation is an individual matter. There will be no mass salvation. Some have mistakenly concluded from Paul's statement—"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9)—some have erroneously concluded from this statement that works are not necessary.

The truth was spoken by Nephi when he said, "We are saved [by grace], after all we can do" (2 Ne. 25:23).

It will require maximum effort for us to bring ourselves within the reach of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ so that we can be saved. There will be no government dole which can get us through the pearly gates. Nor will anyone go through those gates who wants to go through on the efforts of another.

The first principle of action in

Church Welfare is, therefore, for us to take care of ourselves as far as possible.

The second is to be so bound together as families that we shall sustain each other. Fathers and mothers are under a divine command to care for their children, and children have the responsibility to care for their parents.

When Church members cannot provide for themselves and are not cared for by their families, they are to be cared for pursuant to the third principle of Church Welfare, which is, by divine command, that the membership of the Church shall take care of them.

The Lord has made these principles binding upon the Saints in every gospel dispensation.

Now, I would like to repeat what you have heard a thousand times, more or less, about taking care of yourselves. You ought to now, more than at any previous time, make sure that you are prepared to go through a period of stress on the resources you have provided for yourselves. The necessity to do this may come any day. I hope it will not come too soon. In fact, I hope it doesn't come in my lifetime. But it will come sooner or later.

Never forget this matter of providing for yourselves, even though you don't hear as much about it now as you did a few years ago. Remember that it is still a fundamental principle, one that has been taught the Saints ever since they came to these valleys of the mountains. We have always been urged to provide ourselves, in the day of harvest, enough to last until the next harvest. Be sure that you do so now. Be prepared to take care of yourselves through a period of need.

I don't know how things will

work out. People say to me, "What will we do? If we have a year's supply and others do not, it will be gone in a day." Well, it will last as long as it lasts, but I'm not worried about that. If we will do what the Lord tells us to do, he will take care of us all right.

He told the Israelites to leave the land of Egypt, you remember, and they left. When they got to the Red Sea, Pharaoh's armies caught up with them. I suppose they were worried, wondering how they could escape from that army. They did not know, but the Lord knew. When the time came, he simply said to Moses, "Lift . . . up [your] rod" (Exod. 14:16). He did, and a dry-land passage through the Red Sea appeared, and they went through without the loss of a man. *They never would have been thus protected and saved if they had not been doing what the Lord directed them to do.*

Let us do what he has told us to do and then put our trust in him. He can take care of us, and in the day of need he will do so.

Fast offerings

One of the important things the Lord has told us to do is to be liberal in our payment of fast offerings. I would like you to know that there are great rewards for so doing—both spiritual and temporal rewards. The Lord says that the efficacy of our prayers depends upon our liberality to the poor. Way back in the days of Isaiah, he made this clear. When at that time the people complained, "Wherefore have we fasted . . . and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" (Isa. 58:3), the Lord responded with this question:

"Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a

fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?" (Isa. 58:5.)

How like *our* performances. We are prone to get a headache when we fast, and sometimes we pretend to be starving to death. To ancient Israel the Lord put the question:

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? . . .

... to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him. . . ?

"[When thou hast done these things]," he added, "then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . .

... if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday." (Isa. 58:6-10.)

Think of these matchless blessings. They are all promised to those who will liberally contribute to the care of the poor.

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isa. 58:11).

According to the teachings of the great Book of Mormon prophet, Amulek, the very efficacy of one's prayers turns upon his liberality in caring for the poor. This great prophet was a missionary companion of Alma. One of the greatest sermons in the Book of Mormon is the one preached by him as recorded in the thirty-fourth chapter of Alma. Having first explained to his hearers the atonement of Christ, he continued, "Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to

Saturday, March 31

First Day

exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you" (Al. 34:17).

Prayer

He then gave these classic instructions on prayer:

"Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening. . . .

"Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness.

"Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them. . . .

"But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.

"Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you." (Al. 34:21, 23-24, 26-27.)

Care for the poor

Now one, it might seem, would be justified in thinking that people who prayed in this manner would be pretty good people. But Amulek added another qualification:

"And now behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith.

"Therefore, if ye do not remember to be charitable, ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, (it being of no worth) and is trodden under foot of men." (Al. 34:28-29.)

Is it not astonishing that such tremendous consequences attach to liberality in caring for the poor? If you think we will not be bound by these scriptures in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, consider this one from the Doctrine and Covenants.

I am going to read you a few verses from the one hundred and fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, but before I do so, I shall tell you what's in them. I understand from them that the Lord claims the earth as his, that it is not yours and mine to own and manage independently of him. No matter how many stocks and bonds or how much land and other properties we possess, they are not wholly ours. They are the Lord's. He further says that he owns and gives to us all the blessings we have and that he makes us stewards over them, responsible to him. He makes it clear that it is his purpose to provide for his Saints, but he requires that it be done in his way, which way, he explains, is for those who *have* to contribute to those who *have not*. Having made us stewards, he gives us our agency, however, and then lays down the condition that if we accept these blessings and refuse to contribute our share for the care of the poor, we shall go to—well, he tells us where we shall go. I shall now read to you from the revelation:

"It is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures.

"I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

"And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine.

"But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to

provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low.

“For the earth is full, and there is enough.

This theory that we should limit our posterity because we can't feed them is not in harmony with the Lord's statement.

“For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

“Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.” (D&C 104:13-18.)

The revelation from which this is taken was given in this dispensation for our guidance. In light of it, do you think that this matter of taking care of the poor is one that we can disregard and still obtain the blessings of the Lord? Not at all. We obey it, or we pay the penalty.

I suppose that I need not say more at this time about the principles and significance of Church Welfare. I do, however, desire to say a few things about the responsibility of us priesthood leaders for their implementation.

Implementation

You have had explained to you this morning some simple concepts with regard to priesthood councils. There is nothing new in this, only that their application has been expanded above the stake level and below the general level. For years I have had the privilege of traveling throughout the Church and meeting with stake presidents in regional welfare meetings. I know how important it is for you to meet and conduct business at the region and multi-

region levels. We have formalized this morning something that many of us in welfare have done for years. But while we have been at this welfare business for quite some time, there is still much to do. Therefore, I would like to suggest how these region, multiregion, and area councils are to build the welfare work.

Let me begin by explaining that while many programs have been assigned by the First Presidency to either the ecclesiastical or temporal lines, Welfare Services is among the affairs not assigned to either of these two lines exclusively.

The administration of these services is directed by the General Welfare Services Committee of the Church, composed of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, Presiding Bishopric, the members of the General Relief Society Presidency, and the managing director of Welfare Services. Because of the similarity of Welfare Services work to the work done through the temporal arm under the direction of the Presiding Bishopric, the Welfare Services Department reports to the General Welfare Services Committee through the Presiding Bishopric. However, it serves as a resource to the ecclesiastical and the temporal lines, both of which play a significant role in welfare services.

The Role of the Executive Administrator

We look to you General Authority executive administrators to provide the inspiration, planning, and regulation within policy that will ensure that Welfare Services receives full emphasis within your respective areas. You must also train your Regional Representatives in Welfare Services principles and practices. This you can best do by drawing on the resources of the Presiding Bishopric and the Welfare Services Department. They are assigned to work

with you at every council level as shown here this morning.

By following the directives given you by the Quorum of the Twelve and the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, we anticipate a great upsurge of welfare accomplishments in all areas presided over by the executive administrators.

The Role of the Regional Representative

You Regional Representatives have the awesome responsibility to teach and provide the impetus for the implementation of the Welfare Services program.

You will receive guidance for teaching the principles and doctrines of Church Welfare Services through the ecclesiastical line, especially from your executive administrator. Although you are not responsible for operations, your cooperation with region and multiregion Welfare Services personnel is essential.

With the convening of your first official region council meeting, you become the chairman of Welfare Services in your region. In concert with the Welfare Services region agent, you are to implement welfare work as directed by the executive administrator. You will find great spiritual satisfaction as you serve in this capacity.

May I emphasize that the position you occupy in the implementation of Church Welfare Services is vital and critical. Your performance in this matter can make or break the Welfare Services program in the stake units you are responsible for.

Stake presidents and bishops have long had the major responsibility in teaching basic welfare principles and implementing them in their wards and stakes. Their work should be greatly enhanced through the new organizational structure introduced here this morning. From your bishops particularly, we look for great strides in this work in the months and years ahead.

That we may all vigorously pursue our duties in living and in implementing the Church Welfare Services program, I humbly pray. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Our beloved Prophet and President, President Spencer W. Kimball will be our concluding speaker. We will then sing, "Let Us All Press On," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Rex C. Reeve, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and supervisor of the British Isles-South Africa area.

President Spencer W. Kimball

My beloved brothers and sisters, what sweetness fills the soul at conference time. How grateful I am to share the spirit of this hour with you, to feel your spirit and strength, and to recognize your work and your accomplishments.

In the decade of the seventies, we have seen great strides in the growth of the Church. The Lord continues to bless his Church, and this growth will accelerate in the future. It is primarily in response to this growth that we have expanded priest-