

### President Marion G. Romney

President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We will now view a slide/tape presentation entitled "The Work of Love," following which Sister

Barbara B. Smith, President of the Relief Society, will address us.

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The slide/tape presentation "The Work of Love" was presented.

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### Sister Barbara B. Smith

You have just heard the lovely lyrics to the song "The Work of Love," from the Relief Society drama *Because of Elizabeth*. The visual message and this song bring to my mind the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"It is natural for females to have feelings of charity and benevolence" and "You are now placed in a situation in which you can act according to those sympathies which God has planted in [you]" (*History of the Church*, 4:605).

A fundamental reason for organizing the Relief Society was so that the sisters could act together to extend the work of the bishop in caring for the Saints and thus help build the kingdom of God on earth.

In the last general conference, President Benson explained a plan whereby Church government is to be strengthened through the operation of priesthood councils (see *Ensign*, May 1979, pp. 86-89).

In requesting my participation in this meeting, the First Presidency directed me to explain the Relief Society's role in the priesthood councils. We believe that Church members, especially Relief Society members, should know new developments that emphasize the importance of the Relief Society's role in the Church. Although a relatively few Relief Society officers are involved in councils, their influence is far-reaching throughout the Church.

So let us consider the councils.

The General Welfare Services Committee is one of the principal policy-formulating councils of the Church. The Relief Society General Presidency serves on this committee as well as on its executive committee.

Through the organization of the Relief Society, we bring to these meetings a capability to develop approved programs and teach and implement them. We also bring a perspective born of our personal experience and of our communication with Relief Society women worldwide. This is helpful in welfare matters.

For example, some time ago a stake Relief Society president serving on a steering committee for a bishops' storehouse reported to us that the welfare recipients were wasting food because the labels on the products did not have sufficient directions. She cited the pancake mix as a case in point. We, therefore, arranged to have the mix tested, and the pancakes were found to be hard and tasteless. On a second try, the tester followed the directions on the label of a similar commercial preparation calling for the addition of milk and eggs. This test resulted in fluffy, delicious pancakes.

We recommended that instructions and simple recipes be added to the labels of all storehouse products. We are informed that the new labeling will soon be completed. This action will benefit all welfare recipients.

As we serve on the General Welfare Services Committee we find that we not only *give* a needed perspective but we *receive* a point of view that helps us shape the Relief Society courses of study to include welfare principles, such as personal and family preparedness, and to raise the level of awareness among women of the importance of the welfare program. We also *gain* an understanding of welfare goals and objectives that helps us direct the wise use of Relief Society resources in support of them.

### Area councils

The area council is the body that develops plans for a given geographic area. It is presided over by a General Authority who is the Executive Administrator for that area. He is assisted by Regional Representatives and other personnel.

Relief Society involvement in this council comes in the following ways:

1. The Executive Administrator might confer with the general presidency of the Relief Society on approved Relief Society policy, programs, concerns, or resources.

2. An assigned member of the Relief Society General Board is invited to attend the area council meetings when held in Salt Lake City at the time of general conference. In this role, she becomes a training resource to the Executive Administrator.

3. One stake Relief Society president may be invited by the Executive Administrator to attend an area council meeting in the field. She should become informed of welfare matters and of the specifics of her particular area so that she can be helpful in reviewing the welfare master plan from a woman's perspective. She would know, for example, that if the local Relief Society presidents were encouraging welfare recipients to bake their own bread, the supply

of flour and other ingredients listed on the commodity budget would need to be adjusted accordingly. She would know the practicality of such projects as energy conservation in the home or how physical health, career development, or financial training programs might be implemented. Remember, she has available information concerning nurses and other health personnel.

### Multiregion councils

Multiregion councils are usually established where facilities such as Deseret Industries, a bishops' storehouse, or perhaps an LDS Social Services office function. Again, the multiregion council is chaired by the Executive Administrator and is composed of the Regional Representatives from within those regions and other appropriate priesthood personnel.

One stake Relief Society president from each region should be appointed by the Executive Administrator to serve on the council when welfare matters or matters affecting Relief Society women are discussed. The appointed Relief Society presidents should gather information from other stake Relief Society presidents within their regions so that they can bring a list of their needs, activities, and responsibilities as possible agenda items for the multiregion council meetings.

### Region councils

The region council addresses and correlates administrative matters of a multistake nature. It is directed by the Regional Representative, who functions in much the same manner as does the Executive Administrator on a multiregion or area council. On this council one stake Relief Society president is designated by the Regional Representative to serve when welfare matters are discussed.

Through such an appointment, again, a woman's perspective is brought to such matters as the operation of the homecraft program in the case of Deseret Industries, or the care of unwed mothers, or the finding of foster homes through the LDS social services program, or the providing of women volunteers for any of the welfare services programs. In the case of a bishops' storehouse steering committee, a Relief Society president will be particularly useful in making sure the sewing is of high quality, that the patterns used are stylish, and that the proper sizes and quantities are provided.

Relief Society presidents appointed to serve in this capacity should help plan for the training of women in welfare matters, and they should gather accurate information as it will make possible a plan to meet human needs as they truly exist. It is this woman's responsibility to contact other stake Relief Society presidents in that region in order to secure their recommendations for possible agenda items.

The decisions and actions that come back from the region council are transmitted to the various stake Relief Society leaders by the Regional Representative and the stake president and not delivered by the appointed stake Relief Society president.

Once a year every stake Relief Society president should attend a regional council meeting for welfare training purposes and for an annual assessment of how effectively welfare services are being carried out in each ward and stake.

### Stake and ward councils

As President Benson stated in April, the stake and ward councils and welfare services committees remain the same. The full Relief Society presidency serve as members, each with specific duties

relating to an aspect of welfare services. The Relief Society president should prepare possible agenda items so that the Relief Society perspective may be adequately represented in the deliberations of these councils.

The cooperative effort of both priesthood and Relief Society in these councils continues to be a significant factor in successful ward and stake welfare services operations. Such cooperation was exemplified recently when a flood swept over many of the homes in an Ogden, Utah, stake. The stake president reported, "The stake Relief Society president didn't wait for me to go to her. She came to me first."

At his direction, she mobilized the sisters and obtained food for the victims and their rescuers. She quickly set up serving areas in mobile "kitchens" improvised in vans and station wagons, taking hot, home-cooked food to the actual work sites. As the flood waters receded, men and women worked together to clean muddy walls and floors.

Sisters who are called to serve in any of these important council assignments must realize the value of thorough preparation if they are to bring timely agenda items and appropriate suggested solutions to the many human problems facing each ward and stake. We urge all stake and ward Relief Society presidencies to assume the responsibility for thoughtful participation in these councils as outlined in Church handbooks and bulletins.

### Family councils

President Benson spoke of one additional council in which every member of the Church may participate—the family council. It is the one for which all of the others exist.

All families should regularly hold council meetings to discuss such things as how to adjust the budget to include carpet for the living room,

assigning responsibilities for the garden's care, how to spend the summer vacation—so that together the family can arrive at workable solutions. One father called a special family council the night it was determined that a grandmother's leg must be amputated. There were many tears, and there were fond recollections of how full of activity her life had been up to then.

Quickly the family decided that grandmother should be invited to live with them. It was then the mother wisely said, "If she comes, let's make her a queen in our home. We can put her bed right here in the family room so she won't miss anything." The compassionate attitude of the mother prevailed in that home. It led the way for all of the family. It blessed the grandmother as long as she lived with them, which she did until she died; it enhanced the lives of all the members of that family; there was greater unity, cooperation, and togetherness than they had known before.

It is in the home that the woman's most effective influence has always been felt. The sensitivities she has developed in the home need to be applied in other councils so that the cooperation between men and women may produce the most rewarding results for the welfare of all mankind.

The history of our people has magnificent moments when we have taken of our "plenty" and given sustenance to those who were suffering. From those moments we know the joy which comes when need is relieved.

## Elder J. Thomas Fyans

It's a blessing to have the sweet companionship of the Relief Society, with their heaven-sent special sensitivities, beside us in this great Samaritan effort.

The Savior implores us to give all that we have to his work.

You recall that the New Testament states that Jesus stood watching as offerings were given. Some gave of their abundance, and then a poor widow came and approached the treasury: "She threw in two mites" (Mark 12:42).

The Lord accepted her offering, for he said, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:43-44).

The Lord herein points the way for the sons and daughters of God. If we who believe will give all that we have, a way will be opened so that we can alleviate suffering as it comes to our attention. None of us is exempt from dedicating our lives to this principle.

Brethren, the Relief Society presidents of the Church are anxious to share of their abundance and even all their "living" as you place them in a situation where they can act with you in the priesthood councils of the Church to successfully accomplish this great work of love. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Marion G. Romney

Sister Barbara B. Smith, president of the Relief Society, has just spoken to us.

Elder J. Thomas Fyans, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will be our next speaker.

Sister Smith has mentioned priesthood councils. To help in administering Church affairs, priesthood councils are organized at area, region, stake, and ward levels. These