

## GENERAL WELFARE SESSION SATURDAY MORNING

A general welfare services session was held in connection with general conference on Saturday morning, April 5, 1980, beginning at 7 o'clock. Invited to attend this session were General Authorities, Regional Representatives, stake presidencies, high councilors involved in welfare work, bishoprics, stake and ward Relief Society presidencies, and others responsible for operating welfare production products.

President Spencer W. Kimball presided at this session. President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

President Romney opened the meeting with the following remarks:

### President Marion G. Romney

President Spencer W. Kimball, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this session.

We are happy to welcome you to this general welfare services meeting attended by general and local priesthood leaders and sisters of the Relief Society. The matters to be presented at this meeting are of vital importance to the effectiveness of the welfare program. We, therefore, request that you instruct those under your direction in the things you will be taught here.

Under the direction of Donald Ripplinger with Roy Darley at the organ, we shall begin this meeting by singing hymn number 215, "Today, While the Sun Shines." The invocation will be offered by Elder Gene R. Cook, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Executive Administrator of the Andes Area.

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The congregation sang the hymn "Today, While the Sun Shines."

The invocation was offered by Elder Gene R. Cook.

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### President Marion G. Romney

My beloved brothers and sisters, I very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you this morning. Since the welfare program was inaugurated in the mid-1940s I believe I have attended every such general conference welfare meeting we have held.

#### Serving our fellowman

The Church welfare program has from its beginning been, in my mind, associated with the second great commandment. You will remember, of course, that when one of the Pharisees asked Jesus "Which is the great

commandment in the law?" that he responded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:36-40).

As a ward bishop I was involved in the welfare program when it was first announced, and I have been involved in it ever since.

This long participation has taught me that the crowning aspect of a Christlike life is found in serving one's fellowmen.

### **Welfare program based on eternal principles**

In the Church, serving and helping one's neighbor is not done only through spontaneous kindly deeds to our immediate families and next-door neighbors; it is also accomplished through the Church welfare program, which is based upon modern revelation through prophets of this dispensation. Its principles are eternal. They have been revealed and implemented, to some extent, where and whenever the Lord has established his church upon the earth. We read in the Book of Mormon, for example, that "Alma commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had; if he have more abundantly he should impart more abundantly; and of him that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given.

"And thus they should impart of their substance of their own free will and good desires towards God, and to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul.

"And this he said unto them, having been commanded of God; and they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants" (Mosiah 18:27-29).

(This was, as you will remember, in America among the Nephites about 147 B.C.)

In October 1936, the Presidency of the Church issued this statement, which continues today as the guiding precept of welfare services:

"Our primary purpose was to set up, in so far as it might be possible, a system under which the curse

of idleness would be done away with, the evils of a dole abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self respect be once more established amongst our people. The aim of the Church is to help the people to help themselves. Work is to be re-enthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1936, p. 3; see also *Welfare Services Handbook*, p. 1).

As a people and as a Church, we accept as fundamental truth the proposition that the responsibility for one's own economic maintenance rests (1) upon himself; (2) upon his family; and (3) upon the Church, if he is a faithful member thereof.

### **Self-sustaining**

Welfare work divides itself into three main divisions. First is the basic doctrine of being self-sustaining to the full extent of one's ability. By applying the principles of personal and family preparedness, sometimes referred to as temporal welfare, we are to provide our own needs. So doing puts us in position to share our surplus with others. In his April 1937 conference talk, President J. Reuben Clark outlined the course of independence which should be followed by every member of the Church. He there said:

"What may we as a people and as individuals do for ourselves to prepare to meet this oncoming disaster, which God in his wisdom may not turn aside from us? . . .

"Let us avoid debt as we would avoid a plague; where we are now in debt let us get out of debt; if not today, then tomorrow.

"Let us straitly and strictly live within our incomes, and save a little.

"Let every head of every household see to it that he has on hand enough food and clothing, and, where possible, fuel also, for at least a year ahead" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1937, p. 26).

### Family assistance

When circumstances combine to require help, it is Church doctrine that one rely upon his family for assistance. Obviously, no one should become a charge upon the public when his relatives are able to care for him. Every consideration of kindness, of justice, of fairness, of the common good, and of humanity requires this.

President Stephen L Richards taught a principle which every family in the Church would do well to bear in mind:

"I think," said he, that "my food would choke me if [I] knew that while I could procure bread my aged father or mother or near kin were on public relief. I believe a decent family pride is a salutary thing with any people and in any nation . . . , a family pride in wholesome, self-reliant, and enterprising living—a family pride that promotes the utmost solicitude for each member of the family. It wouldn't hurt my feelings to hear a family boast that through all vicissitudes they had come to each other's help and had never received public assistance. I have known brothers and sisters to put each other through school by hard, self-sacrificing toil. I cannot imagine any of these permitting their father and mother to come to public relief" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1944, pp. 138-39).

### Church assistance

Finally, aid is available from the Church. It has been so in all dispensations. Paul himself was a welfare worker, in a very modern sense of the term. We find him writing in Romans 15:

"But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

"For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a

certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

"It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things" (Rom. 15:25-27).

The obligation of the Church to help its poor is here placed by Paul on a par with communicating spiritual riches to those who are in darkness. By both means we store up treasures in heaven.

"Charge them," he says, "that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

In our day, the Lord has given us this charge:

"If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments.

"And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.

"And inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me; and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church and his counselors, two of the elders, or high priests, such as he shall appoint or has appointed and set apart for that purpose" (D&C 42:29-31).

### Essentially a question of spirituality

The foregoing principles are true when properly applied by members

and leaders alike. They bring about the desired end of establishing the Church and building up Zion. It is true, however, that when not properly applied, difficulties follow. Within two-and-a-half years after the original Church welfare plan was put in place by the First Presidency, President J. Reuben Clark made this significant statement in an address in Estes Park, Colorado, 20 June 1939:

"The Church has found that the whole problem is essentially a question of spirituality, rather than of finance or economics [in getting Church welfare work accomplished]. Where the spirituality has been high, the Plan has succeeded; where the spirituality is low, the Plan has lagged. The Church has proved there is no substitute for the great commandments: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy . . . might, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself' [see D&C 59:5-6]" (*Church Welfare Plan: A Discussion*, General Church Welfare Committee, 1939, pp. 32-33).

While we have made great strides in the program since that day, the principle still applies. Everything we do in welfare services must be measured by its accomplishment in spiritual terms. Givers must give out of a righteous heart and with a willing spirit. Receivers must receive with thankfulness and gladness of heart. The Spirit must confirm a bishop's evaluation regarding assistance. It must lead a home teacher and a visiting teacher to know how to respond to needs of families to

whom they are assigned. With righteous intent, participating in this great work sanctifies the soul and enlarges the mind. As we spiritually mature in fulfilling our welfare responsibilities, whatever they may be, we prepare ourselves to become "partakers of the divine nature" (see 2 Pet. 1:4). May it be our happy lot to be filled with that measure of spirit that we may be sealed with the bond of charity, which, as Moroni said, "is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure" (Moro. 7:47-48).

It is my prayer that each and every one of us will learn and apply these fundamental principles of welfare services and gain thereby the promised reward, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Marion G. Romney**

We shall now listen to President Harold G. Hillam, president of the Idaho Falls Idaho South Stake.

He will be followed by Sister Shirley W. Thomas, second counselor in the Relief Society.

## **President Harold G. Hillam**

I have made it a habit of running three miles every day, and I would have to admit that this walk up here leaves me a little more out of breath than the end of three miles. It is a humbling experience to occupy this pulpit, which has been occupied by

such great, great men in welfare services.

### **Teton Dam experiences**

Sometime after the collapse of the Teton Dam and the ensuing