

Bishop Victor L. Brown

My dear brothers and sisters, it is always an inspiring experience to meet with you in the welfare session of general conference. When we consider the significance of this conference as being convened on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the Church, it seems appropriate to address the subject "Welfare Services: Past, Present, and Future."

Eternal principles

The eternal principles upon which welfare services exist today were given by the Lord at the time of Adam. They have not changed over the centuries, nor will they change in the future. The Lord instructed Adam to subdue the earth with this charge: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19). Thus, in the beginning he taught the principles of work and self-reliance. In modern scripture the Lord declared: "Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer" (D&C 42:42).

To the head of the family he gave this latter-day charge: "And again, verily I say unto you, that every man who is obliged to provide for his own family, let him provide, and he shall in nowise lose his crown" (D&C 75:28).

After providing for our own, the Lord explained that our next duty is to the poor and distressed among us. In section 44 of the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

"Behold, I say unto you, that ye must visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief" (D&C 44:6).

Charity

Administering to the relief of our neighbor is born of pure love or charity. In his memorable letter to

the Corinthians, Paul explained, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).

Moroni further explained: "Charity 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" (Moro. 7:47).

By following the pure impulses of charity, members contribute resources to the Church from which the bishop may draw to help those in need. The Lord's charge to Bishop Whitney was to "travel round about and among all the churches, searching after the poor to administer to their wants by humbling the rich and the proud" (D&C 84:112).

Basic expectations

From these scriptures we learn that the Lord expects several basic things of his people:

1. He expects each individual to work and to provide for himself.
2. He expects each family to work together, to be independent and self-reliant.
3. He expects the husband and father to provide for his own.
4. He expects us as individuals and families to share our abundance with the poor and distressed.
5. He expects the bishop to search out the poor and the sick and to see that they are cared for.
6. And above all, he expects his people to have charity in their hearts for their fellowmen.

Since welfare services are the gospel in action, we know that these divine principles are unchanging. They are eternal.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught these great principles 150 years ago.

Growth and development

While the early members practiced the principles of welfare in rudimentary application, it was in the 1930s that the welfare services program, as we know it, was formalized. It applied to the stakes of Zion, which at that time were mostly in the western part of the United States and Canada. Production projects, canneries, and storehouses were established among the people. Now, although there is still much to be done, the welfare services activities in the United States and Canada are approaching maturity.

By the end of 1982, nearly every bishop in these areas of the Church will have access to a physical storehouse. There are presently in operation 802 production projects, 51 central and regional bishops' storehouses, 20 Deseret Industries, 24 employment centers, and 35 LDS Social Services agencies. These exist as resources from which bishops can help the Saints become self-reliant as well as assist those who are unable to provide for themselves.

Now, as to the overseas areas of the Church: Over the past ten years, the international growth of stakes has been phenomenal, increasing from 41 to 269. With this growth, the welfare services program is being introduced on an orderly basis. While every new member can and should live all gospel covenants relative to welfare, we do not expect branches and new wards to implement the full program until they have the capability to do so. It has taken more than forty years for welfare services to reach their present status in the United States and Canada. We look forward to the day when the whole Church is sufficiently mature to have the entire program fully operative. It will require wise teaching of basic principles, along with careful planning, for measured and timely growth to occur. The basic principles discussed earlier

must be taught and lived before the program can appropriately move forward.

There are those who would like to establish the full program immediately. Some time ago, Church leaders in one country asked: "When are you going to bring the full program to us? Our people need it desperately." What they did not understand is that we do not just bring a program to the stakes. It is a part of the complete gospel plan and will develop a step at a time. One does not begin at the top rung of the ladder.

Welfare programs around the world

There are many exciting and heart-warming developments in various parts of the world. Long-range welfare services master plans have been received from England, New Zealand, Australia, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Those stakes in areas where master plans have been approved are moving forward with implementation under the direction of area councils which are well organized and functioning successfully.

In Great Britain, the local brethren have just purchased a dairy project to complement two row-crop projects. They are also in the process of acquiring facilities for a storehouse.

In Australia they have acquired five production projects and are producing oranges and many other fruits as well as every type of local vegetable. They are planning to acquire land this year for storehouses in several major cities.

In Uruguay they are placing special emphasis on personal and family preparedness. Because of high unemployment in that country, they were authorized to establish an employment center last year. A wonderful welfare services missionary

couple and local volunteers are diligently working to help members find or upgrade their employment.

Carefully, but surely, progress is being made toward Church preparedness. However, we still have great concern that as a people we are far short of truly being prepared. The heart of welfare services' success is not Church preparedness but member preparedness. The increased call by bishops on the resources of the storehouse system is an indication that many of our people do not have their reserves and consequently are unable to take care of their own basic needs. I am afraid some members are laboring under the illusion that in difficult times the Church will take care of them. This is not so. The Church is prepared to take care of a limited number of members for a relatively short period of time.

Provide for our own needs

There should be no misunderstanding on this point. The fundamental principle of welfare services is that *you and I provide for our own needs*. If serious economic disruption were to occur, the Church would do all in its power to alleviate suffering by supplementing member efforts. But it would not be able to do for the Saints what we have been taught to do for ourselves for over forty years—that is, to have a year's supply of food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel; to have savings in reserve; and to possess basic production skills. This counsel has been given at least twice a year for all these years. Some have followed the counsel of the Brethren and are prepared, as were the five wise virgins. Some, like the foolish virgins, do not have enough oil in their lamps. (See Matt. 25:1-13.)

A recent Church survey of a representative number of members in the United States indicates that in

emergency circumstances—such as job loss, illness, or natural disaster—the average family had the following supplies: food, twenty-six weeks; clothes, fifty-two weeks; water, two weeks; and fuel, four days. This is not even close to a year's supply. The survey also indicates that financial reserves are low. Only 17 percent could live for more than one year on their financial reserves if income were cut off; 45 percent reported they could only live for three months. The Lord says, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). I suppose each of us knows into which category he falls. What a wonderful thing it would be if all were prepared.

Challenge for the future

Our challenge for the future is to be prepared and to perfect ourselves through keeping the commandments more fully. We may give of our time and talents in service to family, neighbors, church, and community. Through tithing and a generous fast offering, we may share of our means to build up the Church and care for the poor and the needy. The Lord has given us this instruction in section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.

"Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

"And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.

"Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you

unto myself" (D&C 88:123-26; italics added).

May we be blessed to provide the leadership throughout the Church that will cause the membership to be prepared to be received by the Lord when he comes, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Ronald E. Poelman

The ancient Nephite prophet King Benjamin counseled those who had accepted the Savior and received a remission of their sins with these words: "For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, . . . I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, . . . administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally. . . ."

"And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order" (Mosesiah 4:26-27).

Our living prophet of God, Spencer W. Kimball, has said to us who also have hope in Christ: "Welfare Services is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. *It is the gospel in action.*"

"It is the crowning principle of a Christian life" (ENSIGN, 1977, p. 77).

How then may we, in wisdom and order, most effectively use welfare services to administer to the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor?

The answer is found in priesthood councils.

One year ago the area council became the primary council in the field to correlate, coordinate, plan, and resolve problems. Now, a year later, we may consider how the area council is actually functioning, and,

President Marion G. Romney

We have just listened to Bishop Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

Elder Ronald E. Poelman, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now speak to us. He will be followed by President Spencer W. Kimball, President of the Church.

more specifically, its role in (1) welfare services master planning, (2) teaching gospel principles germane to welfare services, and (3) coordinating the welfare services efforts of temporal and ecclesiastical officers.

How the councils work

Personal experience suggests that the principal, immediate benefit from a renewed emphasis on Church councils is the opportunity to coordinate the efforts of temporal and ecclesiastical officers. Through councils, Church leaders can better work together to teach the doctrines, principles, and practices of welfare services and to plan for a great upsurge in accomplishments. The enduring personal friendships which develop during this effort evoke our noblest sentiments.

The Regional Representatives and General Authority Executive Administrator for an area, addressing their welfare services responsibilities, may rely heavily on the Welfare Services area director.

In our first area council meeting, an executive planning committee was appointed, including selected Welfare Services region agents and certain specialists chosen from the area. Also, a timetable was adopted.

Coordinated by this committee, the region agents identified needs and