

Chapter 10

Panel on Church Welfare Initiatives

Harold C. Brown, A. Terry Oakes, and E. Kent Hinckley

Church Welfare: His Sheep Are Serving the World

Harold C. Brown

THE LORD SAID He would place His sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left. He then explained that those on His right side are they who helped someone in need: “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25:35–36). One of the main factors in that final judgment will be how willing we were to help others during this life. And so that is the ultimate goal and spiritual end we hope comes from welfare and giving.

A quote by President Marion G. Romney explains the importance and value of giving, “The Lord says that the efficacy of our prayers depends upon our liberality to the poor.”¹ If you want an interesting study, read it carefully. “The Lord has said that the effi-

1. Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, April 1979, 135.

cacy of our prayers depends upon our liberality to the poor.” Let us each increase our fast offerings and assist in inspiring the Saints in the Church to do likewise. Give enough so that you can give yourself into the kingdom of God through consecrating your means and your time. I promise every one of you who will do it that you will increase your own prosperity, both spiritually and temporally.

The directors who run the Presiding Bishopric’s temporal affairs throughout the world were recently in for training, and we had time with them. We were talking about teaching the law of the fast to people around the world. One of the directors raised his hand and said, “How do you teach people to fast when they go every day without food?” An interesting question. Another director wisely responded with, “Being hungry and starving isn’t fasting.” The requirement is the same, that we set aside that period of time—miss those two meals—in order to give to the poor and needy. I am confident that if one thing could be done internationally in terms of spiritually affecting people temporally, it would be to get them to pay their tithing and fast offerings and to get them to fast. I believe that if they did that, the Lord would bless them in many ways. In the Bible Dictionary it says, “The honest payment of tithing sanctifies both the individual and the land on which he lives.”² So when people pay their tithes and offerings the blessing will come not only to individuals but also to their country. But how does this relate to welfare? “But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin” (D&C 49:20). There is an obligation to give to, and for us to take care of, the poor and needy. “A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race.”³

2. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Tithe.”

3. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:227.

I never cease to be amazed by the Prophet Joseph Smith's statements and vision in so many areas.

What needs to be in place around the world before welfare can be successful? The answer is the administrative structure, and, in my view, this means Area Presidencies. Having three General Authorities there to give direction and stability to the Church is the single most important thing that has aided Church welfare in moving throughout the world. Our directors watch over the temporal affairs of the Church under the direction and guidance of these Area Presidencies. We also have regional welfare committees around the world. All of the stake presidents, stake Relief Society presidents, and the chairmen of the stake bishops council meet on a regular basis to coordinate and handle welfare matters. We also have area welfare agents who are an administrative body to assist stake presidents assigned to every welfare operation. Wherever there is an employment center in the Church, there is a stake president assigned to watch over it. This is true with every welfare operation we have.

Well-trained leaders are essential, and I think we have a long way to go, but great progress has been made. The very important thing, in my view, is to have simple operations adapted for international locations. We have four individuals coming into headquarters later this month who have been hired as full-time, paid area welfare managers. Under the direction of the director for temporal affairs, these people will handle the welfare work in the area. We have not had paid people before. When they were coming for training, I said, "Should we really even let them go to Welfare Square?" I was concerned that they would go there and see all those beautiful operations and then wonder when we are going to transfer them out, and we are not. I think they need to see the basic principles and the basic operations, but in a simplified format.

We have a number of handbooks and instructions to take care of the operations in the United States and Canada, and those are our guidelines internationally. I hope they do not grow beyond it. They

are very simple. They are about helping members with employment needs. The staff will have a few materials, of course, but that is it. That is what the employment centers do worldwide—provide food to those in need. We have some small storehouses and canneries in Mexico and other parts of the world. One sheet, that is it—very simplified. They have only a few items on the stock list instead of the large stock list that we have here. Helping members with food storage means the same thing—simple operations to supplement the more important priesthood operations.

We have four main priorities in our department. First and foremost, we need to be concerned with priesthood welfare, which includes fasting and fast offerings and caring for the poor and needy. There is nothing like ordained officers of the Church who work under inspiration to help people fast and pay fast offerings. It is a formidable task, but it will happen.

The second priority is employment. Once a man gets a job, you hardly need any other welfare operation. If everyone was employed and able to care for themselves through the employment services, you would not need a storehouse, cannery, and quite often, social services—people tend to fight less if they have their needs met.

The third priority involves food and the use of land. Here, we have a few good ideas we are working on, and in some areas of the world we have pilot projects.

The fourth priority involves humanitarian service, because it is a blessing to people around the world and is an opportunity for the Church to be viewed in a positive light in areas of great need. God bless the wonderful Saints who give so generously. I cannot tell you how I feel about it personally, and I know others feel the same way as well. The contributions that come in on your donation slips for humanitarian aid blesses people around the world in ways it is difficult to imagine.

Economic Salvation for Our Brothers and Sisters

A. Terry Oakes

THIS IS AN exciting time in the Church for welfare. I wanted to start out with a quote that I was not familiar with before I started in welfare: “A man out of work is of special moment to the Church because, deprived of his inheritance, he is on trial as Job was on trial—for his integrity. . . . Continued economic dependence breaks him. . . . He is threatened with spiritual ruin. . . . The Church cannot hope to save a man on Sunday if during the week it is a complacent witness to the crucifixion of his soul.”⁴ President Gordon B. Hinckley said that about forty years ago. I know he still believes it today.

I thought I would give you a little bit of information on employment. In 1850 the Church had a Church Public Works Department. It was officially created to provide employment through the construction of public buildings and manufacturing facilities. Then in 1896 they established an employment bureau, which was operated by the Presiding Bishopric. In the 1920s the Relief Society president and the Presiding Bishopric maintained employment bureaus and stressed that each ward would have an employment representative to help. During the 1930s and '40s, a Deseret Employment Bureau still existed in Salt Lake City, but it was mostly for ward employment committees to help individuals who were out of work. The Salt Lake Regional Employment office was set up March 1, 1948. That was probably when we officially began to have paid staff in our employment centers. Domestically, in the United States and Canada, we currently have approximately one hundred employment resource centers, eleven of

4. *Helping Others to Help Themselves: The Story of the Mormon Church Welfare Program*, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1945), 4.

which have paid employees, and we are in the midst of trying to get quite a few more.

You will notice that Eastern Europe is pretty blank. About a year ago, we had couples do employment work in Moscow and Kiev. It proved really difficult because of the economy and the way the members are fairly spread out. Our emphasis in Eastern Europe right now is microenterprise or microcredit. We are working with a few of the larger microcredit organizations to see what we can do with our members. We are also putting employment and humanitarian work really close together. Many of our humanitarian missionaries also do employment work.

The challenge to the individual internationally is that most have inadequate employment. Over a million members of the Church are either unemployed or underemployed. There are many countries where 70 to 75 percent of our Church leaders are unemployed and that same percentage of returned missionaries is unemployed. So we look at our current and future leadership and see that they are struggling. They lack education, but we have found what they really lack is *information* about resources and how to access them. We have visited over three thousand organizations now and have found schools, employers, and microcredit systems. There are a lot of resources out there, but our members have no idea they exist. They also have limited career goals. Most of them are planning where to get the next meal that day, rather than what they are going to be doing in ten years or how to get an education. They develop hopelessness and get into a cycle of poverty. Welfare is service, but if you are in this situation you struggle to serve.

Our guiding purpose as employment resource services is that we support Church leaders in helping individuals become self-reliant in their careers, so they can serve or show others how they have done it. We do this in three key ways: seek, plan, place.

First, we incorporate “seek.” We tell our priesthood leaders that they need to seek out those in need. Our volunteers and paid staff seek out resources. Then we help the individual develop a career

plan and place themselves in employment. I think the hardest thing we struggle with is defining the line between helping and creating dependency. That is hard to do. We assign mentors. We try to help as much as we can, but it is their responsibility to find their own employment.

The first of the three resources we deal with internationally, as far as volunteer and paid staff are concerned, is jobs—where they are and where the employers are. We are working closely with BYU in identifying major employers that will hire our members. One of the key things we use is Job Search Training, a class that runs anywhere from a day to two weeks, depending on the country. Job Search Training teaches simple career-planning techniques, such as how to meet a manager, present themselves, write a résumé or curriculum vitae, look in the yellow pages (if there are yellow pages), and identify what they want to do. This may last up to two weeks, but the first afternoon of the first day they are out looking for jobs. We try to create an urgency and have had great success as far as job placements through this class.

The second thing we become expert on in a country is who we develop relationships with—third-party institutions. They are not Church-run schools, but we try to find the best schools we can. Typically, once we tell them who we are and that we have students, they give us between 30 and 50 percent reductions in tuition. We also try to identify government agencies or private institutions that will give our students scholarships. In Mexico we have had good success with that. Internationally, we are focusing more on private schools than on public schools. It is hard for some of our members to get into public school; private schools are easier to get into. So we try to work out discounts for them to get into those.

The third thing in self-employment we deal with is identifying other employment resource institutions. There are many of them: Enterprise Mentors, Finca, and so forth. We conduct group meetings. For example, we just had one in Monterrey, Mexico, where 120 of our members came to learn about microcredit. After the meet-

ing, we had a number of organizations present there, but if members wanted to meet with them they had to go to their place of business. That was only about three weeks ago, and since then we have had twelve people who are in business for themselves sign up to get a small loan so they can increase their businesses.

It is our responsibility to link individuals with resources and let them make the decisions about what they want to do. As far as future activities, we want to increase the support of Church leaders in employment activities and establish a World Wide Web site for training and resource dissemination. We are working on that right now. We think that it is going to be a real blessing in the future, as far as linking the individual with resources. We want to continue to develop our employment, educational, vocational, and self-employment opportunities and monitor key activities. We have goals regarding the people we want to place, how many we want to place, and what our cost is per placement.

We try to get an individual, as we call it, a *stabilizing* job—just so they can get food on the table. Then we try to work with them, finding out what kind of education they need in order to get that stabilizing job. For example, we worked with BYU and went to Wal-Mart in Mexico. Wal-Mart said, “Send us your members, and we’ll hire them.” The first week, they requested four hundred jobs. We sent them twelve qualified people because we had only twelve who had graduated from high school. The next week they asked for about three hundred, and we did a little bit better: we got twenty-six. We learned that we have a bit of a challenge here. Our members need to get through high school in order to get some of these better jobs.

In closing, I thought I would share a story from Lima, Peru, that I received from our manager down there. He was sitting in his office one evening after closing when a stake president knocked at the door and asked if he could visit with him. He said:

He’s a wonderful, humble man who has been out of work for eight months. He and his wife have been able to support their family during this time doing odd jobs. His wife also sells

beauty products. This has provided about 100 U.S. dollars a month. It is sufficient to make ends meet but not sufficient or stable enough to provide the peace of mind needed by one in such a responsible leadership position [of stake president].

During the interview, various alternatives were discussed. The Spirit was very strong. It was apparent that this good man was determined not to let himself be overcome by adversity. The desire to serve and succeed in taking care of his family was very strong. We had been meeting together for over an hour. In the course of the interview, his countenance began to change from near tears to hope. He confided that he had wanted to come to the employment resource center since it had opened in February (it was June), but he could not afford the cost of transportation. That night he had borrowed the money needed for bus fare, because he felt it was important for him to come. As we were almost ready to end the interview, after having sketched out a preliminary plan, the telephone rang. It was the general manager of the American-English Language Institute, who had called a few days earlier, asking us to send him several people to interview for sales positions and a manager of marketing position. He told us that all the people we had sent were hired and had turned out to be very effective. He then indicated a need for a manager of sales to help train and supervise. Without a moment of doubt, I told him that sitting across the desk from me was a man with just the characteristics he was seeking. I told him he was a leader in the Church. I then described the leadership experience and functions of a stake president in business terms. I told him that I felt this was just the man who could help him achieve his business goals. He responded, "Please send him to my office tomorrow morning for an interview at 9:00." The stake president went the next morning and was hired. He had to hire thirty other salesmen, who were returned missionaries.

For most people it would be inexplicable why the employer would have called at that hour of the evening knowing that the employment resource center was closed. But something happened to prompt him to do so. We know the Lord works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. This incident is one

more testimony to us here that He is directing this work and that He is personally concerned about each of His children.

I think that accurately represents what has happened. I could read letters for another hour about what is happening internationally and the blessings members get when they obtain gainful employment.

International Welfare

E. Kent Hinckley

THE GUIDING PURPOSE of the Production and Distribution division of Welfare Services is to efficiently provide and distribute quality food to the poor and needy members of the Church as requested by bishops; support family home storage; and provide work and service opportunities. As part of this charge, Production and Distribution also provides food for the Church's humanitarian efforts and maintains food reserves for the Church's emergency response. All these activities are intended to build character and self-reliance.

Infrastructure that Facilitates International Response

Physical facilities. It is because of the infrastructure which has been developed in Welfare Services since the mid-1930s that we are able to respond as we do to international needs. A significant element of this infrastructure is our ability to grow, raise, process, and distribute food with a measure of independence from the world. The Production and Distribution division is responsible for the operation of welfare farms that grow a variety of crops, ranging from wheat and alfalfa to dry beans, potatoes, and peas. Several orchards and vineyards raise a variety of fruits. A turkey ranch, cattle ranches, and dairies round out our production capabilities. Food is processed into cans and bottles in twenty wet-pack canneries. Other products prepared for use worldwide include several flour products, pasta,

gelatin, honey, various meat and dairy products, powdered milk, and other powdered drinks, bread, and various soap products.

A trucking company, Deseret Transportation, provides the means to transport raw and finished products and the ability to respond quickly to emergency situations domestically and internationally.

Food reserves. A second element of the infrastructure are the food reserves maintained by the Church. Once a decision is made to respond to a situation where food is needed, the items to be donated are already in inventory at the bishops' storehouses. There are no delays caused by lead times to raise money, purchase the food, and then ship it to a central location to be further prepared for shipping to the affected area. Sufficient inventories of life-sustaining food are maintained so that there is a measure of independence from the world.

Volunteer organization. A third critical element of the infrastructure that allows us to respond internationally is the organization and tradition of volunteers who play a major role in every step of the growing, processing, and distribution of commodities. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, "The real long-term objective of the welfare plan is the building of character in the members of the Church, givers and receivers."⁵ The scriptures also have numerous references to our obligation to assist the poor and needy.

The Production and Distribution division designs and utilizes facilities and processes in such a way that members, as volunteer workers, can productively assist in caring for the poor and needy. Church-service missionaries and large numbers of volunteers prepare food for distribution. The use of member volunteers and Church-service missionaries internationally to distribute food allows the Church to respond quickly and ensure that the food gets to the intended user

5. J. Reuben Clark Jr., special meeting of stake presidencies, October 2, 1936, as cited by Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, October 1981, 130.

in good condition. Recently, members in England packaged wheat grown on a Church farm in England and shipped it to Ethiopia.

Priesthood organization. A fourth element of the infrastructure that allows us to respond effectively internationally is the organization and growing maturity of the priesthood leadership. The establishment of regional welfare committees and the establishment of agent stake presidents and operating committees provide the leadership and oversight necessary for the ongoing successful operation of bishops' storehouses and home storage centers. These local organizations are in the best position to teach welfare principles, coordinate volunteer labor, call Church service managers, review the services offered by the bishops' storehouses and family storage centers, and recommend needed improvements.

International Activities

Family gardens. Member families, in many parts of the Church, could become more self-reliant if they had access to land or water for growing food in family gardens. Excess Church property, or suitable property that can be leased, will be made available for needy members to produce food for themselves and others. In some cases, there is excess Church property or property already owned by members, but it is in need of water. In these cases, simple, effective irrigation systems will be installed using member resources and labor to make this land productive family gardens.

The model for these family gardens is the Kapaka project in Laie, Hawaii. The Kapaka project consists of 270 acres owned by the Church. The tillable ground has been divided into family garden plots that average about 40 feet by 110 feet. Four hundred eighty families are currently growing gardens on this project. An agent stake president and an operating committee are assigned to oversee the operation. Each family needing assistance is assigned a plot by its bishop according to the needs of the family. They grow basic foods

indigenous to their culture such as taro, bananas, bread fruit, yams, beans, and corn.

Family gardens, following the Kapaka model, are being established in Tonga, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Bishops' storehouses. Bishops' storehouses have been in operation in Mexico since 1997. Currently there are seven storehouses providing food in common use, such as corn flour, wheat flour, rice, dry beans, powdered milk, sugar, salt, and cooking oil. The commodities are purchased locally in bulk at wholesale prices and then repackaged by volunteers into smaller packages for distribution. As in the United States and Canada, all distribution from the bishops' storehouse is under the direction of local bishops and is based on the needs of each family. The average value of the bishops' orders indicates that needs are being met modestly. Bishops are taught to provide welfare assistance to members to help them develop spirituality, become self-reliant, and learn to provide for others.

Storehouses have been approved and are in the process of being established in Chile, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. Like the Mexico bishops' storehouses, they will distribute a limited stock list of life-sustaining foods as directed by local bishops. Each storehouse is assigned an agent stake president and an operating committee to provide oversight, coordinate volunteer labor, call Church-service managers, and review the services offered.

Home storage centers. Home storage centers will give members the opportunity to be more self-reliant through dry-pack storage of basic life-sustaining foods. Food such as wheat, flour, rice, and sugar is purchased in bulk to take advantage of lower prices and is then resold to members for packing in foil pouches. The items to be packaged in each country will be determined by what is generally eaten in that country as well as what will store for extended periods considering local climatic factors. The opportunity is very similar to the dry-pack canneries offered for the use of members in the United States.

The first home storage centers were opened in Mexico in 1996. There are now seven centers co-located with the Mexico storehouses.

There are six locations operating in England, and one in South Africa, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Home storage centers have been approved and are in process of being set up in Chile, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Tonga, and American Samoa.

Home storage centers increase member self-reliance. The members are able to purchase basic commodities at a lower price than they otherwise would because the items are purchased in bulk at favorable prices by the home storage centers. Since these products are part of the daily diet of the member, they are able to reduce their food costs. Also, as members are financially in a position to do so, they have the opportunity to increase their self-reliance and personal sense of security by following the prophet's counsel to store food against a day of need.

Family food boxes. One of the best examples of how the capabilities and infrastructure of the Production and Distribution division has been brought together in a unique way is the preparation of family food boxes for international distribution. A family food box is a ten-by-fourteen-inch box, weighing about thirty pounds, which contains various basic foods that will sustain a family of four for about a week. The contents of the box are determined by matching the kinds of food normally eaten in the recipient country with the food that is in inventory in the bishops' storehouse. Because the Church has farms, canneries, processing plants, strategic reserves of food, and the organization and tradition of volunteerism, the Church has been able to respond quickly to the need for food boxes with a variety of food that matches the needs of very diverse countries. Depending on the destination, food boxes may contain rice, soup mix, powdered milk, beans, canned meat, cooking oil, flour, sugar, and other products.

When family food boxes have been approved for distribution, a local stake is called and asked to provide up to three hundred volunteers to pack the commodities in the boxes. The response from the stakes has been almost overwhelming. Usually, more people show up than we have asked for, and everyone has a great experience. They

feel productive and grateful to be able to help those in need. Generally, two oceangoing containers can be filled with 1,350 family food boxes in about an hour and a half.

In the past, food boxes have been sent to Mexico, Kosovo, Venezuela, West Africa, Sierra Leone, Korea, and Mongolia. They have been very well received with high praise from governments and relief agencies because of the quality and variety of food they contain and the ease with which they can be distributed to and used by those in need.

All of this is possible because of Church welfare facilities and production capabilities, Church food reserves, member volunteers, and priesthood leadership.

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