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# Our Masonic Commission

W Bro. Murray Webster

During his year as Grand Master, MW Bro. John T. Harper formed the Masonic Commission to undertake activities to listen to the concerns and ideas of the Brethren of our jurisdiction, and to bring those items to the attention of our Grand Lodge. Consequently the Masonic Commission organized and conducted fifteen workshops throughout the jurisdiction between September 2000 and February 2001. The findings of these workshops were presented to our Grand Lodge at the Annual Communication in Kamloops in June 2001.

The findings of the workshops were organized into three groups and recommendations were made. The three groups were

- high priority items,
- quick and easy items,
- items for further review.

The report and recommendations presented at the Annual Communication were accepted.

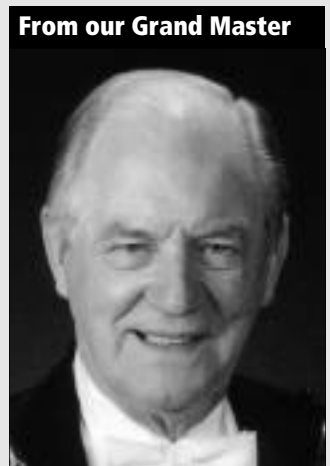
Subsequently our present

Grand Master, MW Bro. James C. Gordon, reappointed the Masonic Commission to continue the work that was started last year. The membership of this year's Masonic Commission includes three of the members that participated in last year's activities and six new members including MW Bro. Harper and three Brethren who are letting their name stand for election for the position of Junior Grand Warden.

This year the Masonic Commission is adding a new element to its approach. This year a survey is to be undertaken to understand the views and opinions of a greater number of the Brethren of our jurisdiction. This survey will be included as part of the January issue of the *Masonic Bulletin*. Brethren will be asked to complete the surveys and forward them to a designated location by February 15, 2002.

The items that are being reviewed this year by the Masonic Commission, in no

At the recent Conference of the Four Western Jurisdictions held in Canmore, the keynote address, by W Bro. Michaelson, asked, "Why do so many question the relevance of Masonry in the 21st century." To address this question we have to view the society in which we live, a society in which the volume of human knowledge doubles every two and a half years. A society where a middle manager in a large company will work 50 to 60 hours per week and his



**MW Bro. James C. Gordon**

spouse will probably work the same—living in a world where they are confronted with thousands of pieces of information every day. Yet in the midst of all this pressure and turmoil, survey after survey reveals that most men and women are genuinely looking for ethical management, moral principles and the guidance to achieve these values in their own lives. Freemasonry can certainly meet these needs but although we put enough energy into bringing people into the Masonic family, we fail to keep their attention. W Bro. Michaelson advises that individuals will hear only those items

## MASONIC RELEVANCE

of information of interest to them. So let us consider those 18 to 20 year olds who began university this year. They were 11 when the Soviet Union broke up; are too young to remember the spaceshuttle blowing up; have never heard of an eight track; were one year old when the compact disc was introduced, and think Jay Leno has always hosted the Tonight Show. There appears to be a rather large communication gap here. Where does this place us? We know there are a lot of people out there who want what we have to offer. Unfortunately they don't know this, because we do not tell them in way that is understandable to them. Now within our organization there exists a tremendous resource; the collective wisdom of 14,000 Freemasons. Hopefully through the participation of a good representation of those Freemasons in the hearings and workshops currently being held by the Masonic Commission we will, through collective wisdom and open debate, be able to take a giant step towards determining what we must do to take our place in the 21st Century.

particular order of preference, are the following:

- conducting business in the Entered Apprentice or Fellowcraft Degrees,

- increasing the interval between Degrees to three months,
- permitting the *Address to*

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## Masonic Commission from page one

the Brethren at public functions,

- having an elected Board of General Purposes,
- having a different process for understanding the capabilities of candidates for the position of Junior Grand Warden,
- permitting Grand Lodge to undertake fund raising activities,
- continuing the Cancer Car Project,
- dealing with weaker Lodges.

The questions and material of the survey will focus primarily on these items. Other items will be also included on the survey, including items that have been deferred for potential review at a later time.

Regional workshops are again being organized throughout the jurisdiction to discuss the above items with interested Brethren. It is hoped that those attending these workshops will understand the items well enough to be able to facilitate a healthy discussion of them in their Lodge prior to the time that the survey needs to be completed.

The first of such workshops was held in Whitehorse on October 20th. Those attending that workshop found the discussions to be interesting and informative. With few exceptions, those attending felt that the day's activities were "time well spent."



A cloud can hide  
the brightest stars,  
So trouble oft ones  
pleasure bars.

W Bro. Palmer Cox

The Masonic Commission will summarize the results of the survey prior to the end of February 2002 and be in position to comment on the opinions of those completing and forwarding the survey. If the results of the survey show a strong indication to proceed with any of the items then appropriate resolutions will be presented to our Grand Lodge for consideration, either by members of the Masonic Commission, or other Brethren, at the Annual Communication in Victoria in June 2002.

In addition, to assist those who are unable to attend the planned workshops, or participate in the discussion of these items in their Lodge, summaries of the conclusions will be included in the December and January issues of this *Masonic Bulletin*. Summaries pertaining to 'increasing the interval between degrees to three months', 'permitting the Address to the Brethren at public functions' and 'having a different process for understanding the capabilities of candidates for the position of Junior Grand Warden' are included in this issue of the *Masonic Bulletin*. Background or historical summaries of the other items will be included in the January edition of the *Masonic Bulletin*.

### Status of First Year Items

The items raised during the first year of workshops have not gone unheard. Many of the quick and easy items were addressed by MW Bro. Harper during his term of office. The remaining items continue to be addressed by MW Bro. Gordon and his officers and committees. The status of the quick and easy items is as follows:

- Permit District installation of Lodge officers: Lodges may request dispensation to do this. It is an item for further discussion by the Masonic Commission.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of sponsors: this is a Lodge item.

- Designate acceptable websites for review and study: a list is to be included in the *Masonic Bulletin*
- Hold Grand Lodge meetings outside the Vancouver area: meetings were held in Nanaimo, Victoria and Chilliwack in the past year; further meetings at Trail, Kamloops and Dawson Creek are planned for 2001-2002.
- Understand why existing members demit: the Research Committee is analyzing reasons for demits.
- Have successful Lodges explain their programs and activities: presentations were made at the 2001 Grand Lodge Communication; Lodges are encouraged to explain programs and activities via the *Masonic Bulletin*.
- Consider Grand Lodge activities to raise funds for special programs: referred to the Masonic Commission for further discussion.
- Include email addresses in the *Grand Lodge Directory*: email addresses are included this year.
- Define and publish landmarks: assigned to the Research Committee.
- Issue to new Lodge Secretaries a checklist of expectations of the Grand Secretary and the Grand Lodge office: this is being prepared by our Grand Secretary.
- Establish standards for Lodge building upkeep: no progress to date.
- Encourage Lodges to consider becoming daylight Lodges: this is a Lodge item.
- Consider establishing a Canadian Work Lodge in the Qualicum Beach area: this is a Lodge item
- permit the use of the *Address to the Brethren* at public functions: Lodges may request dispensation to do this; it is an item for further discussion by the Masonic Commission.

- Establish guidelines for investigating committees: no progress to date.

MW Bro. Gordon has also put actions into place to address the high priority items. The status of these items is as follows:

### Improve public awareness and the public image of Freemasonry

Three regional Community Relations Committees have been formed to undertake activities in their areas for this purpose.

Public cornerstone laying ceremonies have occurred in Dawson City, Yukon (May) and Trail (September). Both have been very well received by the public and well documented by the local press.

MW Bro. Gordon is promoting public awareness of Freemasonry with local press during his visits throughout the jurisdiction and has had great success in Hope and Peachland.

MW Bro. Gordon met with the Canadian Cancer Society in October to discuss ways to enhance the awareness of the funds and volunteer hours that are being provided to the Cancer Car Program.

### Endorse and promote the Mentorship Program

This program is now up and running, and information and computer discs are available through the Grand Lodge Education Committee.

It is up to the Lodges to follow through with this very worthwhile program now that the material has been organized.

### Define and promote "proper" solicitation'

The Grand Lodge Jurisprudence Committee has been assigned this task.

### Conduct officer/leader training

The Grand Lodge Leadership Committee has been assigned this task.

### Provide a resource guide for Lodges

The Grand Lodge website is an excellent resource for

information. Individuals are encouraged to review the material available and share it with members of their Lodge.

It is evident that items have been done and continue to be done to improve the well being of the Craft in our jurisdiction. The efforts of the Masonic Commission are bearing fruit.

**Overall Purpose**

The overall purpose of the Masonic Commission is to listen to the opinions and ideas of the Brethren of the jurisdiction and to bring the priority items to the attention of our Grand Lodge. The items that are being addressed are items that have been raised by the Brethren of jurisdiction during the workshop process. While there are many items that have been raised, the Masonic Commission has endeavored to focus on items that are of particular benefit to constituent Lodges. The members of the Masonic Commission understand that, at the end of the day, having stronger constituent Lodges is the highest priority of our work. Hence, for the most part, we are dealing with items that should have direct impact upon assisting constituent Lodges in becoming more 'successful'. We are endeavoring to provide assistance to Lodges and not create more obstacles. ■

*Prepared by W Bro. Murray Webster of Tyee Lodge No. 66, Prince Rupert, Chairman of the Masonic Commission, and all round nice guy.*

## Proposed resolutions

### Proposal to permit the Address to the Brethren at public functions

Permitting the presentation of the *Address to the Brethren* at public functions is an item under review by the Masonic Commission.

A resolution that would permit this activity might read:

Be it resolved that Grand Lodge sanctions the recitation

“ Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe. ”

H. G. Wells

of the *Address to the Brethren (Forms & Ceremonies, 1982, pp.83-87)* not only inside but outside the tyled Lodge, in whole or in parts, by one or more skilled Brethren on suitable occasions.

At present, Lodges wishing to have the *Address to the Brethren* presented at a public function must request dispensation to do so (at a cost of \$10) from the Grand Master. It is the prerogative of the Grand Master to grant this dispensation. Proponents of this item believe that removing the requirement of the Grand Master's approval for giving this beautiful piece of Masonic ritual will do two things. First it will demonstrate that it is permissible to give this presentation to the general public and secondly it will encourage a greater number of presentations. Proponents of this item believe that the presentation of the *Address to the Brethren* to the public is an appropriate and significant method of improving the image of Freemasonry to the general public.

During his year as Grand Master, MW Bro. John T. Harper received and approved 18 requests for dispensation to allow the presentation of the *Address to the Brethren* to the general public.

### Proposal to have a different process for determining the capabilities of candidates for the position of Junior Grand Warden

The Masonic Commission

has been asked to review the proposal of having a different process in place for determining the capabilities of candidates who wish to be elected Junior Grand Warden.

A resolution to allow a different process to be determined might read:

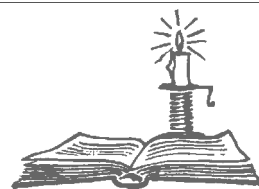
Be it resolved that the Grand Master appoint an individual or committee to recommend a different process for determining the capabilities of the candidates who wish to be elected Junior Grand Warden.

At present an understanding exists whereby 'campaigning' for the position of Junior Grand Warden is not permitted.

Historically it is expected that delegates to the Grand Lodge Annual Communication will choose the Junior Grand Warden based upon how well the Brother is known throughout the jurisdiction. In more recent times, to permit exposure, candidates for the position of Junior Grand Warden have been introduced at the Annual Grand Lodge Communication. Proponents of this item believe that other means are needed to give those voting in the election of the Junior Grand Warden a better understanding of the attributes and qualifications of the candidates. These 'other means' could include permissible verbal presentations (e.g. all-candidate meetings), permissible receptions, and expanded, printed, biographies. Even further, this process could prescribe required prerequisites for any Brother wishing to let his name stand (e.g. a certain level of involvement in Grand Lodge affairs).

### Proposal to increase the interval between degrees to three months

The proposal to extend the interval between Degrees from the presently required two weeks to three months is one of the items that has been brought forward to the



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*The Library at Grand Lodge*

**Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes**

December 8, 2001

ALL MEMBERS OF GRAND LODGE ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THIS EDUCATIONAL FORUM.

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Masonic Commission for further review.

A resolution to do such might read:

"Be it resolved that in Regulation 144(b) the words 'two weeks' be changed to 'three months'."

Simply stated the proponents of this item believe that while a candidate may be able to learn the liturgy of the preceding Degree, it would not be possible for him to learn the history or philosophy of it and, without such, that Degree would be largely meaningless. Further, it is a concern to those who advocate amending this article in our *Constitution* that the interval of two weeks as presently required is inadequate, both for the candidate himself and for the Lodge, and inferentially, to the Craft, which is the ultimate beneficiary of a well-instructed member.

Proponents of the three month interval proposal note that other Grand Lodges have recognized the benefits experienced by requiring a longer interval between Degrees by mandating up to a one year minimum period between degrees.

## Lodge notes

**Acacia Lodge No. 22** recently held its second Railroad Night, reviving a long tradition of **Keystone Lodge No. 121**.

Attended by our Grand Master, MW Bro. James. C. Gordon and a number of gandydancers, highlights of the evening included a lecture on "The Working Tools of the Railroad" by W Bro. Allan H. Toop and an address on the Railroad Lamp with a goodly display of antique and contemporary lamps by W Bro. Douglas R. Dack.

RW Bro. John Heidelberg and Brethren of **Chemainus Lodge No. 114** recently visited

retired Chief Engineer of the Chemainus sawmill, W Bro. Colin G. Ford, to present him with his Sixty Year Service Pin. At age 93, W Bro. Ford is the senior Life Member of the Lodge.

At the open air meeting of **Prince Charles Lodge No. 153**, in June 2000, MW Bro. John T. Harper delivered a moving eulogy to the memory of the late MW Bro. John Lobban, Grand Master for 1989-90.

Accompanied by the faint melody of a lone bagpiper, MW Bro. Harper's emotion-filled words will long be remembered by the Brethren who attended.

*Our apologies for not mentioning this occasion in an earlier Bulletin. This Open Air Meeting is an annual event and Brethren who are travelling in the area are encouraged to attend.*

## Abroad

A case was recently brought to the European Court by the Grand Orient of Italy. One of the local government authorities in Italy in a region called the Marches had proclaimed that anyone wishing to be employed by them had to declare he was not a Freemason, and this was taken to the European Court after it had gone through the Italian courts. The Italian government objected, claiming that the Grand Orient of Italy had no standing to bring such a case on behalf of its members. The court ruled not only that as an association registered with the state, the Grand Orient of Italy had standing, but that the law of the Province of the Marches had effectively prevented its employees from being Freemasons, and is therefore in breach of article eleven of the European Convention which guarantees the right of lawful associations. The Court fined the Italian government 10,000,000 lira.

It is an important principle.



## GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY DECEMBER, 2001

5	Wed	District No. 1	United Services No. 24	Langford
8	Sat	Board of General Purposes		Vancouver
10	Mon	District No. 17	Prospect No. 172	W. Vancouver
26-28	Wed-Fri	Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania		Philadelphia

How it can be applied in England we will have to wait and see but a number of local authorities and government departments were awaiting the decision of the European Court.

Under the headline, "Victory for Masons at last," the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* reprinted that the borough council had decided to withdraw all reference to Freemasonry from its employment documents, stating that "Freemasons would now be treated the same as any other club or society members and the existing rules regarding declarations of interests in the normal course of Council business still applied." The report noted that "the decision was made in a secret meeting of the Borough Council's cabinet."

*Reprinted from the United Grand Lodge of England's Grand Lodge News, 12 September, 2001.*

## In the community

W Bro. Rod Macintosh of Prince Charles Lodge No. 153, a regular contributor to the *Peachland Signal*, is to be commended for giving Freemasonry a boost in his August 30, 2001 column.

While noting an earlier photo in the paper of RW Bro. Steve McLauchlan and local Brethren donating badly-needed equipment to Brookhaven Care Centre, he took the opportunity to promote our Cancer Car Program and to refute the

attacks of anti-masons.

He also recorded an unfortunate recent incident. "Recently a popular Okanagan citizen died. Since they expected a big crowd at the service, they rented a large Kelowna church.

"Just before it started, church officials demanded that his Masonic and Shrine regalia be removed from the building, causing further discomfort to an already distressed widow.

"Fortunately sanity prevailed, but shame on them all the same!"

Shame, indeed. Kudos to Bro. Macintosh for his promotion of Freemasonry and bringing this incident to the attention of a wider audience.

*Our thanks to W Bros. R.G. Kerr and A.W. Bilsland for bringing this to our attention.*

## England

At its September meeting the UGLE approved recognition of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Michigan and the Grand Lodge of Slovenia.

The Grand Lodge of Slovenia is the twenty-fourth European Grand Lodge to be recognized by the UGLE and the third in the former territory of Yugoslavia. The UGLE now recognizes nineteen Prince Hall Grand Lodges.

*Reprinted from the United Grand Lodge of England's Grand Lodge News, 12 September 2001.*

Letters to the editor regarding issues of concern to Freemasonry are earnestly solicited.