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A part of, or apart from, society?

by RW Brother Michael W. Walker,
Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge of Ireland

Every individual, on occasion, is forced to be a little introspective and ask himself "who am I and where am I?" Even an organization such as the Masonic Order must also occasionally ask itself "what are we and where are we?" We are a fraternal organization, the aims of which are brotherly love, the relief of our distressed brethren and their dependents and the search after "Truth" which we may express as, and expand into, public and private morality, the knowledge and fear of God and, following on from that, respect for, and love of, our neighbour. This respect includes toleration of his personal viewpoint, his religious beliefs and his political opinions. If we pursue the aims of the Order, our search should widen, yet focus our vision, while ever making us more deeply aware of, and closer to,

the Great Architect of the Universe, heightening our spirituality and deepening our insight into that which we may never hope fully to understand.

There is so much more to Freemasonry than the shallow depth of today's assessment and its scant inspection by today's society, obsessed as society is with material success for the individual rather than his contribution to society.

The Masonic Order is not just another organization like Rotary, Round Table, Chamber of Commerce or any other; all designed to meet differing particular needs and carry out distinct functions.

If Freemasonry were any or all of these then they would not have come into being. We are what we are; and any attempt to assume the mantle of others detracts from both.

Probably there are many



Last year, with the assistance of several brethren of Maple Leaf Park Lodge No. 63, part of the stage set for a Vancouver production of Bro. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Magic Flute* found its way into our Grand Lodge museum. Curiously enough, the design, we are told, was derived from a photograph published in our centenary *History*. The artifact in the photograph has unfortunately gone missing from our archives but we now have this wall hanging to remind us of it.

who joined Freemasonry thinking it was something else or who, having joined it, would seek to fashion it into what they want, as being easier than trying to identify the institution they need and seek, which they thought they were joining when they became freemasons. This is not a cure for anyone's ills.

It is true to say, however, that within the Masonic Order world-wide to-day, numbers are falling. Reasons for this are not hard to find and are based

largely on the superficiality of today's society, the many pressures on individuals and the multiplicity of opportunities, in the social scene, for disposing of leisure time.

It has been identified by American research work into this problem, that there is a very strong inverse relationship between the amount of disposable leisure time that any particular pursuit requires and its popularity with individuals.

People nowadays have a very

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limited amount of free time due, often, to very heavy demands by their profession or occupation; and this leisure time must be rationed out sparingly to avoid competition with family and other priority interests. Any pastime which makes substantial demands on time available, or which is not perceived to give a fair return—however that may be measured subjectively—will not be favoured and, in masonic terms, this will be evidenced by reduced attendance, no matter how pleased, proud or honoured a brother may feel in being a member of the Order. We all know the annual attenders at the installation dinner—brethren who come, bring guests and enjoy themselves hugely—who are then not seen for another twelve months. They are acknowledging their “belonging” to the organization without its providing, or seeming able to provide, the stimulation necessary to encourage regular attendance.

My grandfathers, apart from their club and their lodge, probably had few enough outlets for leisure time and the monthly meetings were looked forward to, perhaps, as opportunities.

Nowadays there are a host

of activities open to all strata of society which not so many years ago would not have been open to them either socially or financially; and the monthly meeting or meetings, in many cases, instead of being opportunities are competitors with other activities whose “return” may be perceived more favourably.

In marketing terms we must view Freemasonry as a product. This is what we are “selling”, or otherwise providing, for uptake by members and potential members. We must either improve the product or make the packaging more attractive,

Freemasonry is a fairly stable product in itself—very little can be done to alter the product without changing it entirely in both essence and appearance. Its principles and precepts have stood the test of time and are as valid today as ever. We cannot change the product and remain in the same business; and we must lie true to ourselves in this. If we want to get into a new line of business it must be accepted and recognized that this is exactly what we are doing; and will it perhaps not be long before somebody decides that the new product is not quite right and needs further adjustment to meet the current demands of society? This, I suggest is not an option which is open to us. What we have and what we stand for will always be right, even if its acceptance rises or falls on the scales of time.

What we can do is upgrade the packaging, and make it look more attractive to potential customers, while also actually making it more palatable to current consumers. In the former case we can—and indeed already so do—actively adopt a higher profile; and gently but firmly “let our light shine before men”. The candle in the window is the invitation symbol understood by all; and some will accept and knock on the door. I am entirely

against the “go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in” attitude. This is the means that those who would appoint a public relations consultant seek to adopt. Hard-sell is not for Freemasonry however you may try to dress it up. Freemasonry is there to be adopted and savoured by those with minds attuned to, or even seeking, its attainment and what it provides. Freemasonry is not for everyone; but within all populations and at all times there will be those to whom it will appeal. By its packaging and presentation these customers may be identified and maximized but they cannot be created. “I am that I am” and no amount of manipulation or massaging will turn into silk a purse made from a sow’s ear. ■

Online

This month marks the tenth anniversary of our Grand Lodge website. Originally containing little more than text taken from a media handbook published by the Community Relations Committee in 1995, the website has grown to over 2,200 pages.

Our website has earned an online reputation for the depth and scholarship of the information provided as well as for the high quality of graphics and images. The Anti-masonry Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section is considered most comprehensive and is widely cited online.

The only complaint made about our website has to do with the lack of names and contact information for Grand Lodge officers and lodge secretaries.

This omission is a conscious decision on the part of our site administrator and is endorsed by our Grand Secretary’s office. Although many Grand Lodge websites will provide the names, and often phone numbers or pictures, of Grand Lodge officers, our website

policy reflects a very real concern about privacy and security. An annually printed Grand Lodge Directory is distributed to all lodge secretaries and copies are available to members of this jurisdiction. Members of other jurisdictions should contact our Grand Secretary’s office through the proper masonic channels.

Ideas and suggestions for further developing our website should be forwarded to VV Bro. Trevor W. McKeown at admin@freemasonrybcy.ca. ■

Lodge notes

This past summer Governor General Adrienne Clarkson presented Medals of Bravery to Bro. David Saunders of **Goldstream Lodge No. 161**, Langford and W Bro. Michael R. Brook of **Mt. Shepherd Lodge No. 159**, Sooke for their rôles the previous June in rescuing a family from a burning truck on the Trans-Canada Highway near Shawnigan Lake.

In September **Aurora Lodge No. 165**, Victoria, celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary with the assistance of **Confederation Lodge No. 116** and the participation by a goodly contingent of brethren from Sequim, Washington. Our Grand Master MW Bro. Robert McSween attended the aftermoon meeting, as well as the evening banquet, both events made all the more enjoyable by the presence of spouses. ■

No secret

The Rev. Joseph Johnson, well-known masonic writer, in a lecture published in Vol. 2 of the *British Masonic Miscellany*, expresses a strong conviction that, while fidelity to the landmarks and traditions of the Order require that its secrets should be sacredly guarded,



W Bro. Palmer Cox, 1893

there is, nevertheless, much to gain and nothing to lose by giving greater publicity to the principles and ideals underlying and controlling the activities of Freemasonry. He sets forth under eight headings what may be given to a non-mason.

These are :

1. A knowledge of the ancient origin of Freemasonry may be more widely disseminated with advantage to non-masons and without detriment to Freemasonry
2. Another thing a non-mason may know about Freemasonry is that, whilst its signs, tokens and shibboleths are secret, there is nothing in it which may be considered incompatible with a man's civil, moral or religious responsibilities.
3. There is a widespread misconception as to what is involved in the obligations taken by freemasons. "The mission of Freemasonry is altruistic. It has regard for others and is exemplified in forms of service and sacrifice
4. Non-masons might also know that Freemasonry provides men with a standard of life which is in no sense a contravention of their religious faith.
5. Another thing a non-mason might know is that Freemasonry is not a religion, nor can it take the place of religion, and yet it is essentially religious in its nature and expression.
6. Every non-mason also might know that Freemasonry recognizes man engaged on a great Quest, involving faith in the Unseen and Eternal.
7. Another thing non-masons might know is that it is due to an entire misconception of the nature of the Craft to say that Freemasons are pledged to support each other in all spheres of life, irrespective of character, righteousness and equity.
8. Another thing that every

non-mason should know is that Freemasonry is a fraternity of love. Freemasonry measures men by the presence or absence of love in their souls, love for one another and love for humanity.

Reprinted from Masonic Bulletin, May, 1938, p. 4.

Chaplain's corner

by V.W. Bro. Doug. Sowden

On the way to a masonic meeting, a brother and I passed a tall mountain. The rock on its top, clear of snow, was a rust-brown in the sunlight.

"Iron?"

"Probably."

I thought, "It may be iron ore, but I doubt that it will be mined at that elevation, and there may not be enough iron content in the ore to make a mine successful."

Unprocessed, iron ore is not that useful. It's merely rock. Can you imagine a skyscraper built with a framework of iron ore? Not likely. We all know that the ore has to be transported to a mill. The rock is processed to increase the percentage of iron in it. Then it is heated in a blast furnace and the superfluties are skimmed off to be discarded as slag.

However, even purified iron, by itself, is not a great building material. It is weak and it rusts readily. Wrought iron bends easily and cast iron breaks apart when hit hard.

Only when other metals, such as nickel, carbon, titanium, molybdenum and chromium are added to the mixture do we get steel—steel strong enough to erect the superstructure of the tallest and most enduring edifices.

Thus, the individual freemason should purify himself by ridding himself of useless slag, skimming away the superfluties of his life, and tempering himself in the fires of challenge and experience.

The bridge builder

by Ms. Will Allen Dromgoole (1860-1934)

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast, and deep, and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near,
"You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide—
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today,
A youth, whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm, that has been naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

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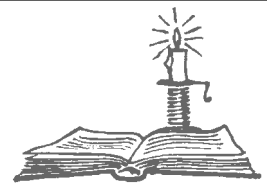
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Then, he can supply his own mettle—bright, shining and strong—to build his family, fraternity, community and country.

As the mixing of various metals forms steel, likewise in Freemasonry we meld our individual strengths and contributions. Our diversity, coupled with our unity of purpose, is our strength. ■

DDGM selection

An historical perspective

It all began on 23 June 1888 when the Grand Master reported that he had named six Special Deputies to report to him on the condition and state of the Craft in their vicinity. On 25 June, 1888, Grand Lodge adopted a resolution dividing the jurisdiction into four districts: Vancouver Island, New Westminster, Yale-Kootenay and Cariboo, and authorizing the Grand Master to appoint deputies as he deemed necessary.

In 1891, MW Bro. Angus McKeown recommended "That in future the delegates from the several Masonic districts should elect, at the Annual Session of Grand Lodge, their own District Deputy Grand Masters. By doing so the Grand Master will be relieved from a delicate task, and the various districts conferring the honour will naturally place a greater value on the office." The Committee on Address approved his suggestion but it was held to be unconstitutional and no action was taken.

In 1917 MW Bro. William Henderson proposed a constitutional amendment to provide for an election of the DDGM by a committee of "Immediate Masters and Wardens, or their proxies, of the particular District attending the Regular Communication of Grand Lodge, representing in person or by proxy Lodges in that particular District for which the

officer is to be chosen, and by no others." This was referred to the Committee on Constitution.

On 20 June 1918 the Committee reported that they felt that the present system worked; the relationship with the Grand Master would be more harmonious if the deputies were of his choosing; that it would not be to Grand Lodge's advantage to have lodges say who their inspector shall be; and that the Grand Master should not be deprived of a constitutional prerogative. The committee's report was adopted.

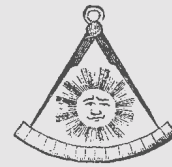
In 1920 the delegates from Corinthian Lodge No. 27 proposed a similar constitutional amendment. The committee disapproved and the motion was defeated.

In 1925 an edict was issued prohibiting the canvassing for Grand Lodge appointive offices; an edict that remains in our current *Constitutions*.

In 1931 the Grand Master expressed his opinion that DDGMs should be elected. He felt that the Grand Master was not in the position to be familiar with all the brethren of the jurisdiction and that he rarely had the time to properly consider the choices offered him. He argued that they were Grand Lodge officers and not the special representatives of the Grand Master unless specifically requested to act as such. He further suggested that a district meeting of past and current masters could easily make a choice.

In 1932 the Grand Master attempted to initiate discussion in this direction but found himself convinced that a better system would be to allow the reappointment of capable brethren for a second or third term.

In 1934 the Grand Master did not visit every lodge in the jurisdiction, as had been the goal in the past, and recommended an enlarged rôle for the DDGMs in inspecting the lodges. In 1934-35 the



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY NOVEMBER, 2005

3	Thu	International Night, Lafayette 241	Seattle
4	Fri	Installation Saanich Peninsula 89	Saanichton
5	Sat	District No. 17 Mt Garibaldi 127	Squamish
11	Fri	Remembrance Day Service	Vancouver
12	Sat	District No. 24 Triune 81	Powell River
14	Mon	Worthy Grand Matron, Maple Leaf 2 OES	Vancouver
15	Tue	District No. 18 Mount Zion 120	Chilliwack
16	Wed	District No. 2 Union Solomon 9	New Westminster
18-19	Fri-Sat	Fall Ceremonial Shrine	Burnaby
18	Fri	Installation Ymir 31	Salmo
19	Sat	District No. 6 Sentinel 146	Castlegar
22	Tue	Blighty Night Comox 188	Comox
26	Sat	District No. 8 Selkirk 55	Kimberly

system of district meetings was established. In 1935 the four DDGMs were former appointments, two from 1934 and the other two from earlier years.

It was not until 1953 that the DDGMs were given any form of written instructions as to their duties.

Today, the Grand Master elect is presented with a list of recommendations provided by the outgoing DDGMs. Practice varies from district to district, but in the main, the past DDGMs meet with the current DDGM to recommend one or two names from a rotating list of the lodges in their district.

The question for discussion is whether or not the current process meets our needs and whether or not it would be in the Craft's best interest to create some system of elective office. Discussion is encouraged. ■

Teachings

by W Bro. R. T. Thomson

In the masonic institution, we meet together as a brotherhood in order that we may be a brotherhood, and that the teachings of Freemasonry may express themselves through the individual. We do not join to

get anything, but to give something. We so declare in our application for membership, and again during the ceremony of being admitted. To give, not to get, to give himself, give of his means, and to give his contribution to the age and generation in which he lives.

We have the paradox that in giving we also get. We get a society to live in, a philosophy to live by, an ideal to look up to and to live up to. Here we are able to meet in friendship undisturbed by the friction and conflict and competition of everyday life and are able to appreciate the value in each other, those graces of mind and character which might be hidden or obscured in the daily routine.

Our institution does not necessarily operate through carrying on organized undertakings. Freemasonry makes itself felt through the impact of its principles in the lives of the individual members of the Craft, and they in turn make their impact on the community by taking their share of responsibility of carrying the community on. ■

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