

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
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SOME MUST OF NECESSITY RULE AND TEACH

by

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I have been an ardent reviewer of the reports of this fine conference for many years and I must say I consider that I am very honored and privileged to have the opportunity of presenting a discussion paper to this conference.

While the reports have always provided much food for thought, there has been a significant lack of answers and/or guidance provided in answering the multiplicity of questions or problems that have been raised. The presentation of Rt. Wor. Bro. Kitchen last year introduced this point. "It Has All Been Said Before." Perhaps the time has come when we should examine ourselves as Grand Lodges to determine if we are part of the answers or if in reality we are a part of the problems.

Consideration of this point lead me to the selection of my topic "Some Must of Necessity Rule and Teach." A very simple straight forward statement which should create no confusion; however, let us examine it in detail.

"Some" - defines as an indefinite number. Who are they? The general charge identifies those responsible. The brethren elected and appointed to assist in the government of this lodge (Grand Lodge); yes my brethren it's us. We are a part of that "some"

"Must" - defined as being obliged or compelled to do it, being required to do it. It is noteworthy to point out that it doesn't say may, or should, or could, but rather must.

"Of Necessity" - defined as being indispensable or unavoidable, there is a great need.

"Rule" - defined as to be in command, to prevail, to govern.

"And" - defined to mean also, in addition to, besides, used between words of equal importance. Which is the most important Ruling or Teaching?

Do we rule as a result of or through our teaching or do we teach as a result of or through our ruling? A difficult question to answer, however, I think it is significant to look at the other half of the sentence in the general charge - "Others must of course submit and obey." Perhaps our initial statement should be - Some of necessity must teach and rule.

"Teach" - defined as to give instruction, to impart knowledge to, to cause to learn, to direct the development of.

So then the topic may be restated to be; that due to the great need, it is unavoidable that those who have been elected and appointed to Lodge Office or Grand Lodge Office are required to govern, to impart knowledge to, and to direct

the development of the masons in their jurisdiction.

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In the process brethren, let us never, never forget that we have but one aim, to please each other and to unite in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness. In my journeys throughout my jurisdiction and I am sure others are no different, this aim has not received the priority it requires and a much better, closer and more understanding relationship will exist throughout our jurisdiction if we can emphasize our primary aim.

Now we realize what we have to do let us ask ourselves, do we have the organizational structures to best carry out that which is required of us? Basically, I believe we do; however, our organizations should not be considered to be cast in stone and constitutional changes should be considered if it can be shown that a better job can be done through a change in organization. Some portions of our structures appear to operate in a manner which would not support and assist in the statement that those who are elected and appointed must teach and rule.

At the 1978 Conference, Rt. Wor. Bro. H.G. McCrae of the Grand Lodge of Manitoba identified the responsibilities of Grand Lodge as follows:

1. To see that masons and Lodges live within the terms of our Act of Incorporation and Constitution in a helpful rather than dictatorial manner.

2. To provide leadership and encouragement.

3. To provide unity throughout the jurisdiction through an organized pattern of endeavour.

4. To provide educational material and assistance in program planning.

5. To listen to suggestions and criticism. -

Reviewing these responsibilities one cannot help but notice that the teaching function predominates over the ruling function. Even though this fact is stressed in all jurisdictions, there still appears to be a certain fear of Grand Lodge, due to the feeling that Grand Lodge performs a kind of policing action to keep member lodges in line.

How do we overcome this fear? and misunderstanding? Through education and communication. Perhaps one area of our organization that could be better utilized in that education and communication is our Grand Lodge Bulletins. Here we have a communication that is distributed to every member on a monthly basis. We see a message from the Grand Chaplain in December, also a message from the Chairman of the Bursary Committee in November and the occasional message from the Grand Master re his theme, the spring workshop and the annual communication but you seldom hear from other Grand Lodge Officers. Are we as Grand Lodge Officers failing to use the best means of communication we have with our brethren? Could we not conduct a strong education program through our Bulletins? Similarly, at the lodge level should we not be encouraging those who are elected and appointed to provide in each lodge bulletin or notice some masonic message or materials of an educational nature. In reviewing Alberta Grand Lodge Bulletins, I note that in the 1976-77 year the Grand Master M. Wor. Bro. Aspeslet made use of the bulletin to provide some educational guidance and instructions for his junior wardens, and there have been other instances where the Grand Master has provided a special message on a specific point. It is my understanding that the bulletin editors are always looking for material for the publication and it would appear that those who are elected and appointed should

be making greater use of the Bulletin as a means of communication with the brethren of their jurisdiction.

One of the identified responsibilities of a Grand Lodge has been earlier identified as to provide educational material, and assistance in program planning and one area of the organization which has been set up specifically to satisfy this responsibility is the Grand Lodge Research and Education Committees. The reports of these committees in the proceedings each year summarize the masonic research and education activities which the committees have observed taking place in their jurisdictions.

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This information is obtained from reports presented at committee meetings by the District Deputy Grand Masters and the district research and educational representatives. There appears to be little or no input from the committee appointed by the Grand Lodge. The organization is sound but should we not be making better use of this organization to carry out our responsibilities.

As an example - a quick review and comparison of successful lodges as compared to those which are not so successful indicates that those lodges which have a continuity of sound leadership are much more successful than those who do not have that sound leadership on a continuing basis. Some district officers recognizing this fact have undertaken to organize district mini-workshops to provide leadership training. These workshops have been reported to the Grand Lodge Research and Education committees.

The members of those committees have a responsibility to teach and rule and in that capacity should they not be reporting to the Board of General Purposes on successful and sound educational programs together with recommendations as to the implementation of these programs in other districts? And should each Grand Lodge through its Board of General Purposes not be prepared to provide guidance, expertise, resources and overall assistance in implementing leadership and educational programs on a broader scale?

In this area, the Banff Spring Workshop is operated with the blessing of the Grand Lodge; and most Grand Lodges provide guidance and assistance through the institution of the Mentor Plan and the Claudy Books Program for the training of new masons. Our research and education committees should be continually on the lookout for programs which will improve the overall education programs and will assist in the quality and the advancement of freemasonry in our respective jurisdictions.

The area of our organization which I find raises the most questions among the members of the craft and perhaps which should receive attention within the context of "Some Must of Necessity Rule and Teach" is the Benevolence and benevolent funds. Some feel the Board of Benevolence is incorrectly named and should be called the Board of Investment since it controls the major portion of the investments of our jurisdictions.

The allocations to beneficiaries from these funds are relatively small because in today's society it is difficult to give assistance in addition to that provided by Government Welfare Agencies. Supplementary aid from our funds would result in a reduction of the amount provided by other agencies, with the result that the recipient would not receive any additional funds.

The operations of the Boards of Benevolence are restricted by the constitution giving them the control of the expenditures from the Benevolent and Relief Funds but stipulating in our jurisdiction that grants may only be made to members and

relatives of members except in special humanitarian instances. Also, the first responsibility for benevolence rests with the constituent lodges and they must then request assistance at the Grand Lodge level, and grants at this level will only be supplementary to grants provided by the constituent lodges. In practice it would appear that past policy would indicate that the Grand Lodge grants generally will match those of the constituent lodges, which in the case of small lodges in many cases is inadequate.

The board is also authorized to make grants to the Masonic Higher Education Bursary Fund and also to pay its own administrative expenses. As a result, funds allocated to benevolence are not utilized and capital in these funds continues to grow.

Masons who have taken to heart the teachings of the lecture from the northeast angle in the Canadian Rite first degree, who are benevolent without ostentation, to whom Faith, Hope and Charity are not mere words without any meaning, and who believe that masonry has gone forth from age to age,

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the constant messenger of peace and love; comforting the mourner, speaking peace and consolation to the troubled spirit and carrying relief and gladness to the habitations of want and destitution find it difficult to rationalize those beliefs to the operations of the Boards of Benevolence.

While some of the capital was derived from an assessment against membership it is recognized that a portion of the capital funds represent trust funds transferred or bequeathed to Grand Lodge, it should be pointed out that under the terms of most of the trusts the revenues from these funds were to be used for benevolent purposes and for the good of freemasonry, and we have failed in carrying out the trust terms placed upon us in not using these funds for the purpose intended. A large proportion of benevolent funds represent an accumulation of this unapplied income. Many masons after examining Lodge and Grand Lodge financial statements ask why more is not being done, why is each grand Lodge not leading the way and in a practical way demonstrating our teachings.

Should a Board of Benevolence not be responsible to the Board of General Purposes with that board providing guidance as to how the unapplied funds should be expended for benevolent and/or masonic purposes such as the area of research which is receiving limited funds from government agencies. Perhaps we should support a chair in science or a chair in medicine or some other field. Or should constitutions be amended to require the Boards of Benevolence to recommend the manner in which the funds, in excess of those required for the benevolence of the members and their relatives, should be expended?

Yes my brethren "Some Must of Necessity Rule and Teach" however one further point which should be made to those who hold that responsibility is perhaps best demonstrated in a story from the V.O.S.L. Be it historical or parable it presents the hidden message.

The Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem where he found in the Temple those who were selling oxen and sheep, and the money changers at their business and making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables and he said to them "Take these things away, you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade."

What was being done was not illegal and formed a necessary part of the sacrifice

and worship of the many pilgrims. However, these activities should not be conducted in God's Temple and likewise those who rule and teach should ensure that their temples are clean and pure, that they have not become so involved with the activity that they have lost sight of or wavered from the Freemasonry they are trying to teach and exemplify.

One of Bro. H.G.McCrae's responsibilities of Grand Lodge is identified as to listen to suggestions and criticisms and several of these identified by questions from the craft have been discussed and I am sure you have other areas you may wish to consider. One fact is certain, there is a need for better communication within the craft in general which will forestall, answer or explain many of the suggestions and criticisms raised.

Those who rule and teach have a monumental task before them in guiding the craft through some very difficult times ahead. The degree of success attained will in large measure depend upon the unity within the craft and that unity can best be obtained and strengthened by insuring that our principles are being applied and practised to the greatest extent possible throughout our organizations and no stone should be left unturned in achieving that application.
