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Whither Are We Travelling? - Towards a Different Leadership.

by Stephen Godfrey P.M. Haida Lodge No.166.
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I was listening to the radio the other day. An author was being interviewed and he was asked to read from one of his favourite books. He read the first and last paragraphs. You will recognize the book immediately I begin the quote. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, It was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way - (in short, the period was so far like the present period that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.)

and...

It is a far far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; It is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.

Charles Dickens - A Tale of Two Cities. The man being interviewed commented how much those words fitted today as they did over 100 years ago when the book was written. No doubt you too have suddenly realized how prophetic the words are. Like me, you also have heard many brethren make comment about the woes of our Craft with some placing blame directly upon the society we now are, that the Craft's woes are simply reflecting what the world is like around us. Others see the dismal disarray of our society and say that the woes of our Craft have nothing to do with the way society is.

I simply ask the question, where is the humanity in humans today? Where are those great leaders of the past whom we looked up to for leading us through these times? Where is the Masonry in Freemasonry today? 'Where are the Masonic leaders of today? I begin this presentation with this quote from the Tale of Two Cities because Dickens was certainly fighting with a similar dilemma then as we are now. We have been witness to events that

have had us shaking our heads and wondering "What is going on?" I sometimes wonder the same question of Masonry. What is going on? Is there a plan? Exactly where are we heading?. Can anyone help us get a true grip of what the best paths are for us to tread towards the next 30 + years? Hence the title of this paper "Whither Are We Travelling?"

The Free of Freemasonry is a most wondrous prefix. Within the title of our Organization is an opportunity to speculate, to speak of the unknown, and dream a little as well, without being charged with treason, sent to the guillotine, or deported. But as I see it too, the Free in Freemasonry also gives us the opportunity to choose our destination, not always to be tied to all traditions, -some of which have perhaps seen their day, - but to create new traditions.

So it is with this paper tonight. I want to present to you perspectives of things past, recent past and with some things which tell of possibilities for our years ahead. Remember though that neither I nor you have the ability to gaze into a crystal ball and see clearly where we shall be in 30 years.

Grand Masters in general, as their title suggests, are our leaders of Freemasonry. Constitutions tell clearly of their unique role they play in the jurisdiction they lead. No one can question their decisions. And it is clear to me that they must not only show that quality of leadership but also they must give it away. How do they do that? How can someone give leadership away and still expect the respect and dignity which comes with the title? They do it by allowing others in our craft to lead. Our Grand Masters have been no exception to the rule. Several have made great strides to see to it that individuals and sometimes groups, but particularly all of us, have been given the opportunity to lead in some measure. Here are some examples.

In 1988, Grand Master Dennis Marsh proposed four long range goals to consider as the essence of our Freemasonry in BC:

- to further the practice of charity
- to make Freemasons more knowledgeable
- to stimulate pride in being a Freemason
- to enhance the image of Freemasonry

In so stating these goals of Freemasonry in British Columbia, Marsh placed the future solely in our hands and not the hands of Grand Lodge and its Grand Officers, not with Grand Office and the staff of the Grand Secretary, and not with its Grand Executive Officers.

In 1990, Grand Master Douglas Grant struck a committee to investigate the loss of membership. to compile specific and practical suggestions for lodges to use to retain members. In

1992, the work of this committee directed Grand Master Waldie Manion to establish another group.

The Craft Review Committee was struck, under the leadership of R.W. Bro. Murray Webster to investigate all aspects of Freemasonry in B.C. and to make recommendations to Grand Lodge. It was given a 5 year mandate to work both from studies, from perceptions, from attitudes expressed and to present ideas which might help make Freemasonry more meaningful, and more enlightening to British Colombian Freemasons in the years ahead by recommending strategic plans for the next years. The life of this committee was 2 years.

Grand Master Clark Gilmour in 1995, led by forming another major committee called the Masonic Advancement Committee, under the leadership of RW.Bro. R.Wm. Headen. Its mandate was to study and receive submissions from interested parties covering the following subjects:

Mission Statement - Strategic Plan for Grand Lodge

Methods to increase the bursary capital fund
Appointment of DDGM's and other Grand Lodge appointments.
A statement of Freemasonry and Religion
Working business in the EA degree - discussion.

The recommendations presented to Grand Lodge in 1996, were from 261 submissions presented to this committee in response to their working paper. Those 261 submissions came from individuals, from Lodges and from districts. 261 submissions therefore may not imply 261 individuals. Relevant to the topic in this paper were the following:

Response from the submissions concernmg leadership:-

- ❖ Leadership opportunities should be very apparent in the system
- ❖ Good Leadership Is vital to our Jurisdiction.

From the plan presented by the committee in addressing the question of leadership recommended that Freemasonry:-

- ❖ Attract and encourage desirable leaders from the community to join.
- ❖ Sponsor Regional and lodge leadership programs for all Masons.

The life of this committee was 2 years.

Within these few short years there had been a tremendous amount of work completed by members of Grand Lodge and yet I feel in some ways, we are still in this state of uncertainty. Enterprises into new areas were started but where did they end? Was the work completed? Whither are we travelling?

Both Grand Lodge and our lodges are in many respects the same. Senior executive officers have approximately the same length of time to build a team and make plans for the future. Most lodges seem to be just grasping this very important aspect of planning, the need to build a team and to work as a team. Long gone is the time for each Master to make his year special with his own agenda and own plan. Long gone is the work of each Master to be an isolated year for his lodge.

The time has come for Masters to lead a lodge from plans they have spent several years to work with the leaders of the lodge, and that in any Master's particular year, he is seeing these goals achieved towards the lodge's vision of the future. Leadership of the Master is shown best when he gives leadership away. In his year, he gives opportunity to others behind him to offer them the freedom to discuss and plan.

Good Masters delegate. Many people refuse to delegate to other people because they feel it takes too much time and effort and they could do the job better themselves. But effective delegating to others is perhaps the single most powerful high leverage activity there is. In a nutshell, delegated duties empower others.

That is what Grand Masters are elected to do, and that is what DDGM's are appointed to do. That is what Masters are elected to do so and that is what we have opportunity to do. Any changes therefore come from us; not the Grand Master, not the DDGM. not the master but us. If we are not allowed to be given the opportunity to lead then we certainly do have dictatorship. Grand Master MacLaurin spoke once of Freemasonry being a benevolent dictatorship. It can be. if the leaders do not offer leadership.

Once in a while a mason comes onto the scene who takes a problem and finds a solution and the idea is worth taking a more than a fleeting glance at it. I was given a paper by a brother, and I thank him for doing so. The contents is an example of a group empowering themselves to put together an alternative view of their Freemasonry. Here is the summary of that paper. This comes from a paper called Back to the Future - a Prescription for Masonic Renewal (a European concept lodge model). It is written by Bro. Kent Henderson. His Craft Lodge is in Australia.

In Australia a new kind of approach has begun to emerge in lodges. The new plan has come about because of:-

- a) poor attendance
- b) poor management of the lodge
- c) poor programs to stimulate the members.

In compiling statistics of the membership around the world. he noted that 5 of Australia's Grand lodges were in the top 10 of grand lodges showing drops in memberships. He saw that as a clear signal that there was something wrong and needed righting. Why were they losing members? His research showed the following:

dues had not risen with the cost of living and the little that new members gave for Initiation and annual dues was small and not worth caring about. It would be a little like a person paying \$100 for a golf membership today: that the price has not changed in decades.

quality of the refreshment board had become a joke: dried sandwiches. sausage rolls and coffee and tea, month in, month out. the tolerance factor was the biggest effect of disappointment and hence a drop of membership. Many could not tolerate the haphazard ways that the lodge was run each meeting.

The effect of the loss of members has shown a decline in ceremonial work, a key element to any lodge. Men, very senior in years, were being placed into chairs when younger and more energetic men should have been there. Ritual was being presented by brethren unable to commit to memory, or who could not remember the work.

Of course the small number of men of younger years applying for membership was declining. what can Freemasonry offer a young man who upon entering a lodge for the first time, sees men well on in years, small turnouts to meetings, ritual being given that tells no story because of the constant need for prompting, and at the end of the evening, stale sandwiches to boot?

Henderson found that interest in Freemasonry in Europe is now beginning to rise. Men are clammering to enter some lodges and others have now got waiting lists. Annual dues are a week's wages. That would be close to \$400 - \$500. Less than 50% of the petitioners are accepted

Festive Boards are a thing of the past and many now have full evening meals before or after the meeting. Candidates will take up to 5 years to receive the three craft lodge degrees.

In the interim times, the candidate is involved in education sessions, subjected to heavy verbal and written exams. So it takes time to be a Mason, and when you are, it takes time to progress. Bro. Henderson decided to try the same thing in his local city. Lodge Epicurean was born.

Lodge Epicurean. (def. one of refine tastes, especially of food and drink.)

A new lodge was formed. It was formed from a group who treasured above all. The quality that Freemasonry should provide. Dues would be structured high. Getting members was important. but what was more important was keeping them. Such new members, it was felt, would certainly promote and invite friends to consider joining if they themselves were thrilled about the group they belonged to.

To keep the membership, the lodge went all out to present the one thing that Masonry is supposed to offer.. education. And quality was the key factor. Next, the bylaws were more of an expression of how a Masonic Lodge should be run rather than the regular specifics of the duties and responsibilities of its officers. There are 21 guidelines that create its bylaws. -

The Bylaws in summary.

1. Quality in all aspects of the lodge and social events is paramount. Quality must be paid for.
2. The Lodge will meet 6 times a year, one of which will be installation of Officers. Lodge opens at 6:00p.m.
3. Appointment to office will be on merit and progression will depend on demonstrated quality, a attendance, and interest shown.
4. All visitors will be vouched for by the Tyler, Inner Guard and Secretary.
5. A Committee of Inquiry will be struck each year to check efficiency of the candidates and those promoted to higher degrees. All candidates'will receive one degree per year.
6. Each candidate will have a lodge mentor to help him through the three years of the degrees.
7. A collection shall he taken at each meeting for charitable purposes. No raffles will he held at the dinner.
8. It shall not be the practise of the lodge to receive visitors after the lodge has been opened. It seems this practice was typical. A late brother would not be admitted.
9. The lodge shall hold one practice a week prior to the meeting.
10. The Master shall install his successor.

11. Other lodges will be used for degree work if, in the opinion of Lodge Epicurean their work is of a high quality.

12. Minutes and other relevant correspondence shall be circulated prior to the meeting. The main work of the evening shall commence no later than 6:20 p.m. All meetings end at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 8 p.m.

13. Dues will be in three parts Grand Lodge Fees, Lodge Administration, and Dinners (\$365/year, up to the weeks salary again). Joining fee and initiation fee \$100.

14. Dinner will be after the lodge meeting at various restaurants in town. (The Lodge Chose a Thursday because of the low attendance in restaurants by the public on that day.)

15. Dinner and Social Committee will be struck, to organize functions.

16. Master~elect shall select his own restaurant for his Installation.

17. Members can bring guests but are responsible for the cost of their dinner.

18. Visitors can attend dinner. Must pay before Lodge opens -\$45.

19. No members will be allowed to have dinner if his dues are in arrears.

20. Limited speeches at the Dinner, guest speakers excepted. Toast to the Queen will be the only toast.

21. Non-members will be invited to attend the dinners upon approval of the Master. The member will be responsible for the dinner fee and ensure appropriate attire of his guest - dark suit.

This lodge has shown over 54% increase in its membership since it began, . all in 3 years. This lodge chartered with 33 members, and now has a membership of over 50.

In this same article an education syllabus of the lodge is also printed. Each candidate is required to know of the essentials of the degree, but is also expected to read several articles from Masonic books.

Here is an example of Masons who have taken the Initiative and gone their own way. They have not veered from the Constitutions

of their Grand Lodge. Nothing in their ritual has changed. But they have made a difference. And this brings me to the first of several fallacies that I see in our thinking.

Fallacy 1. Leadership comes from Grand Lodge.

Reality 1. Leadership can only come from the Lodge and District {which is Grand Lodge.}

Remember first, there are still brethren who believe that Grand Lodge consists of the Grand Master and his Grand Lodge Officers, the Grand Lodge Offices and staff; and the committees of Grand Lodge. WE are Grand Lodge.

Leadership and stimulating ideas of leaders come from men like you and me who attend lodge regularly and see the need to change a few things without treading on any toes of the Constitutions, bylaws and ritual. As a district, if we decided that a complete change to the style of Masonry was worth the risk, like Lodge Epicurean, it would be our decision. Grand Lodge has nothing to do with it. Its concern would address solely constitutional rulings.

Computer use and Web Page sites all came from the membership before Grand Lodge placed its seal of approval upon it. A new mentoring program from Victoria-Columbia No.1 is now being considered as a possible mentoring program for the Jurisdiction. Grand Masonic Days were the brainchild of Bro. Morton Reaps who had been running successful workshops like that in Roberts Creek for many years before. Newsletters of lodges are always initiated by a brother in the lodge, never Grand Lodge. The commencement of a District Education Officer was the idea of a District Deputy Grand Master. not of Grand Lodge.

Leadership is often stated to come from Grand Lodge, but in reality, Grand Lodge tends to wait and see the success of a project/idea before it embraces it as a worthy program for the jurisdiction. A valuable leadership trait to have. However. the most valuable leadership Grand Lodge offers us is in the selection of the DDGM's. The most valuable decision any Grand Master-elect can make is to select D.D.G.M.'s, who are ready to lead the District appointed to. DDGM's are the key to making Masonry progressive in our jurisdiction. (It is, by the way, the only position using the term "Master", that does not carry with it a gavel to rule the brethren.) The DDGM's importance to the welfare of Freemasonry therefore. is vital.

Fallacy 2. Promotion of Masonry by Grand Lodge to the province of BC will improve our image.

Reality 2. The local support that Freemasons give to the business community and charitable groups will serve us better because we are closer to the action.

The impact of the painting of the Masonic Hall in downtown core has certainly been one of the best examples of a locally spirited thrust to get Masonry known to Victoria. As much as we are still going through some growing pains, the use of the Conference Centre is also having an impact upon the community. The opportunity for public to be introduced to Masonry by attending a function at the conference centre has been shown by some of the new members who have sought membership into a lodge.. essentially coming from a visit to the centre.

We all know too that it is from the close circles of friends whom we know that we will find possible new members for our lodges. I have heard of no one who has joined a lodge in town because they have seen the cancer car travelling on the road, or have used the cancer car program, or that he saw Masons assembling at Harrison Hot Springs for their annual Meeting. The Charitable Foundation is a wonderiul step that Grand Lodge has taken to help his fellow human. Be assured that it was not created to increase our membership. That is still our job at the local level.

Fallacy 3. The more lodges in the register of Grand Lodge the healthier Masonry is in the jurisdiction.

Reality 3. Fewer robust healthy lodges would probably be more effective than the large number we have.

When times are good and lodges are wealthy with respect to membership population, it is fitting for the lodges to divide and create new lodges. Conversely when memberships are struggling it should be the time to surrender warrants and join lodges which continue to have health and happiness, until such times in the future when membership becomes robust again and new lodges are formed. The important element here is that Freemasons enjoy their Freemasonry, wherever it is.

Fallacy 4. Amalgamation of lodges in trouble is the best method to stimulating interests in Masonry for the lodge member.

Reality 4. There have been few amalgamations that have worked successfully.

It seems that a better solution might be to hand in a charter, allow the membership of a dropped lodge to find its own new lodge. Or it might be advantageous to start afresh with a new mandate and strategic plan of how the lodge will function and work in the future. Lodge Epicurean is a good example. A few brethren who wanted something different made a lodge which was vigorous and healthy. Their Masonry now meant something to them. There is a future!

Fallacy 5. Lodges in cities can draw from a large population and will have a greater number of candidates.

Reality 5. Again it seems that lodges in smaller towns will do just as well if not better because there is a closer tie to the community.

If a lodge in a small town is active in its community, has a quality building, well looked after and its members are known in the community, then chances are better that the lodge will continue to grow. Discovery Lodge No.149 in Campbell River is now the largest Lodge in the Province. The work those brethren have done to build a solid foundation of community involvement, not as a lodge but as individuals in the community has been the growing success of that lodge. Many lodges in Europe are between 50 - 100 members in size.

Now, I would like to begin to draw this together. I see the future of Freemasonry in BC at a District level. I see a DDGM working with a District Committee to help, aid and assist the lodges in its district to motivate, to offer programs. to make plans for the future, to work accountability into the Lodge. This committee would be composed of DDGM and his successor - a brother who has been informed that he will be the DDGM in two years time - prominent Masons who have shown a record of working hard for Freemasonry in the district, the District Education Officers, the immediate Past DDGM. That there should be the same continuity of brethren on the committee as one finds in any lodge is necessary for planning ahead. Team building and teamwork become the cement that binds us together. In short, I see a new DDGM emerging in BC. one who will require skills in strong leadership and planning, team building and motivation and visioning, and communication.

What would this District Committee do? The District Committee's top priority would be the lodges under its umbrella, assisting the officers to offer support in creating lodge meetings which are interesting to attend and well worth an evening away from home. (Just as an aside - The University of Victoria offers a speakers bureau that lists 400 topics on which their faculty members will come and speak to you - for free) Those attending well planned programs leave having learned much and wanting more. I do not see a D.D.G.M. attending every meeting of the lodges or even attempting this feat. I see him and his committee helping and planning for future years and making progress in revitalizing Lodges. I see the committee help with charitable work locally, not for recognition but where the need is. I see the Lodges supporting the Committee because lodges having seen the commitment of the committee, they reciprocate that help. I see lodges reducing the number of meetings to 6 a year. I see lodges committed to ceremonial work at the highest level of presentation, that the new initiate sees the value not only monetarily but for his well being. Wouldn't it be amazing if at his first meeting, an initiate, having had his hair removed, sees the lodge fill to overflowing with brethren, all wishing him a

great send off on his masonic journey? I see the families of our members supporting one another more, and becoming even more of the social structure of the lodge.

Grand Masters over the many years have been interested in the local scene and what is going on. Grand Lodge has always taken an interest in any programs which have been proven and worthy of consideration as part of a provincial plan. But even more particular today, I see the strength of the Grand Master in his selection of his Deputy Grand Masters in the 28 districts of our Province each year. This one single task should probably be the hardest in his preparation as Grand Master, not his program, not his plans for the year. Those topics are motivations we all need to keep us sharp masonically. The District is our connection with our Grand Master. This is where we hold our loyalty. This then is where the work should be.

Most of all then, Grand Lodge supports our endeavours. It remain as our spokesman about our Masonry in other Jurisdictions. It is the executive which meets and greets masonic visiting dignitaries, keeps records of all its members, sponsors a newsletter which keeps us updated in events around the province. But more importantly, it proclalrns the successes of its members.

What is vital to all organizations like our own. is that we continue to look inwards to plan and re-plan, to create a strong sense of purpose for years ahead - we ENVISION regularly. Nothing in this paper suggests any changes that are contrary to our foundation.

Leadership and Communication are two of the most commanding and compelling attributes of an D.D.G.M. who is appointed. To be less means the district floats in limbo for a year, spinning its wheels. We cannot afford too many more years of spinning wheels, Brethren.

We have to see the potential out there and bring the best into our lodge lives. Local Masons make the difference. District 21 is rich with the highest quality of Masons in our jurisdiction. who have an abundance of ideas worth taking the time to listen to. We must all be leaders in Freemasonry, every day, every year. Whatever we want in Masonry, give it away. We want happiness in our Freemasonry. give it away. We want stimulating Freemasonry, then we have to give it away. We want good leadership. then we show it be giving it away, giving it to someone so that he can grow. and so Masonry can grow.

Will there ever be a time when someone will be able to write with honesty about our Masonry? (with apologies to Charles Dickens):

It was the best of time, yes it was the best of times. It was the age of wisdom, and it was the age of envisioning. It was the era

of belief it was the reign of humanitarianism. It was the season of light and enlightenment, it was the season of leadership and teamwork, It was the spring of hope, it was the winter of abundance. It was years of continuous bountiful living, and being, and supporting, and encouraging. We loved each other and worked regularly for the betterment of our fellow human. We had everything before us, and we knew the pathway we were travelling towards our future.

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