

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH  
650 Fisgard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1R6  
1999-2

### **CANADIAN FREEMASONS**

by

Bro. Jeffrey Thomson, Confederation Lodge No.116. B.C.R.

Why did I become a Freemason? It's not a simple question to answer. I could name several reasons why Freemasonry appealed to me. One of the more appealing reasons for me is the emphasis on the study and implementation of high moral standards in every man. Another, and equally intriguing reason, is the rich and colorful history of the order.

When the Worshipful Master of Confederation Lodge asked me to research and talk on Famous Canadian Freemasons, my eyes opened to the rich and colorful history of our order and the men who, like ourselves, embraced the order and upheld it's tenants in their everyday lives. In every case, every subject I studied through libraries, news media, and the internet I was impressed by the national and global notoriety achieved by some of these great and influential Canadians. I was also struck by the distinct lack of masonic affiliation in any report or article written or presented on any of my subjects.

While researching into the lives of notable Freemasons, one thing you will notice is that their Masonic involvement is never mentioned. You would be able to find volumes of biographical data on the likes of John Diefenbaker (prime minister), John D. Eaton (department stores), Oscar Peterson (pianist), or J.H. Bloedel (Mac -Blo) and not at any time will their biographical data mention where their mother lodges are or when they were initiated. I was puzzled at first, thinking this was a tremendous oversight. How is it that so many great, powerful and successful men, who were masons, could not have any mention of their Masonic involvement in any sort of testimonial of their lives? As I studied further, I discovered that this one missing link was a vital key to understanding why these men, like ourselves, were Freemasons. You see, we did not become Freemasons to further our careers, get rich quick, or become legends in our own time. We are masons because we all believe strongly in the basic tenets of the order, relief truth and brotherly love.

Tim Horton was a famous hockey player, born in Cochrane, Ontario. January 12, 1930 - died in 1974. His playing career spanned 25 years. He played on 4 Stanley cup teams and received the J.P. Bickell award as the Toronto Maple Leafs most valuable player. He was selected to 4 all-star teams and holds the Leafs team record consecutive games streak at 486 games. He was inducted into The Hockey Hall of Fame in 1975.

A fine record for any man and not one mention of his Masonic affiliation, that is until you read what others had to say about him. George Armstrong, the only member of the Leafs to wear the uniform longer than Tim Horton thought he was a very generous and considerate individual who was easily approachable and is quoted as saying, "No finer person, teammate, or hockey player ever lived." According to Bobby Hull, " Few players brought more dedication or brought more honour to the game. He was my idea of a super pro."

In the Toronto Maple Leafs organization, he will long be remembered as one of the best defencemen and one of the finest gentlemen ever to wear Leaf colours. It is accolades like these that point to the one basic truth. Tim Horton embraced and lived freemasonry.

Sir Sanford Fleming lived from 1827 - 1915. He emigrated to Quebec when he was 17 years old. He was a civil engineer and was Canada's foremost railway surveyor and construction engineer of the 19th

7.

century. Much of his work helped to create the Canadian Pacific Railway. He advocated the world be divided into standard time zones and in 1884, his proposal was accepted worldwide. He is known internationally as the "Father of Standard Time" and his concept is still in use today. Mr. Fleming also designed the first Canadian Postage Stamp, the three penny beaver, issued in 1851. Not much Masonic reference there until you learn about his personal mono inscribed into the coat of arms at Fleming College in Ontario. "LET YOUR DEEDS SHAW"(show). He embraced the craft! It's not hard to imagine these men, like ourselves, doing the work that we do today, learning the craft and benefiting from the fellowship of our fraternity. Can you see a youthful Sanford Fleming sitting at a festive board as a young mason, perhaps just initiated and having someone like Tonuny Hammond at his ear encouraging him to be the best mason that he can be by letting his deeds show!

Perhaps one of the least known but most powerful examples of unrecognized Masonic conduct should be attributed to Gordon Sinclair the celebrated journalist and radio personality whom Canadians will remember as a staple on Front Page Challenge but whom Americans remember for galvanizing their nation during a time of extreme turmoil.

The USA had just pulled out of Vietnam and was suffering on every level as a result. Confidence worldwide in everything American was at an all time low and domestically the nation was divided on the entire war effort. Bro. Sinclair woke up the morning of the pull out and was shocked at the news from all corners of the globe disparaging the United States as nothing but war mongers. The financial news for the States was grim as the dollar set record lows and dropped 47 points in value in one day. The students, domestically, were rioting against the government and the war effort and veterans of the war were ostracized. He could not believe what he was seeing and rushed down to his office to prepare his daily radio show. What he prepared in 35 minutes was 2 pages of text that changed the tide for the United States before the end of that business day.

The text of his presentation was as follows:

"Americans"

by Gordon Sinclair (circa 1973)

"The United States dollar took another pounding on German, French, and British exchanges this morning hitting the lowest point ever known in West Germany. It has declined there by 41% since 1971 and this Canadian thinks it's time to speak up for the Americans as the most generous and possibly the least appreciated people in all the earth.

As long as 60 years ago when I first started to read newspapers, I read of floods on the Yellow River and Yangtse. Who rushed in with men and money to help? The Americans did They have helped control floods on the Nile, the Amazon, the Ganges, and the Niger Today the rich bottom land of the Mississippi is under water and no foreign land has sent a dollar to help.

Germany, Japan and, to a lesser extent, Britain and Italy were lifted out of the debris of war by the Americans who poured in billions of dollars and forgave other billions in debts. None of those countries is today paying even the

interest on its remaining debts to the United States

When the Franc was in danger of collapsing in 1956, it was the Americans who propped it up and the reward was to be insulted and swindled on the streets of Paris. I was there. I saw it.

When distant cities are hit by earthquake, it's the United States that hurries in to help. Managua, Nicaragua is one of the most recent examples. So far this spring, fifty-nine American communities have been flattened by tornadoes, - nobody has helped. The Marshall Plan, the Truman Policy, all pumped billions upon billions of dollars into discouraged countries. Now newspapers in those countries are writing about the decadent, war-mongering Americans. I'd like to see just one of those countries that is gloating over the erosion of the United States dollar build its own airplanes. Come on let's hear it! Does any other country in the world have a plane to equal the Boeing Jumbo Jet, the Lockheed TriStar, or the Douglas 10? If so, why don't they fly them?. Why do all

8.

international lines except Russian fly American planes?. Why does no other land on earth even consider putting a man or woman on the moon? You talk about Japanese technocracy and you get radios. You talk about German technocracy and you get automobiles. You talk about American technocracy and you will find men on the moon... not once, but several times, and safely home again. you talk about scandals and the Americans put their's right in the store window for everybody to look at. Even the draft-dodgers are not pursued and hounded. They are here on our streets most of them, unless they break Canadian laws, and getting American dollars from Ma and Pa at home to spend here.

When the Americans get out of this bind (as they will) who could blame them if they said "the hell with the rest of the world.. let someone else build or repair foreign dams or design foreign buildings that won't shake apart in earthquakes." when the railways of France, Germany, and India were breaking down through age, it was the Americans who rebuilt them. When the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central went broke nobody loaned them an old caboosie. Both are still broke. I can name you five thousand times when the Americans raced to the help of other people in trouble. Can you name me even one time when someone else raced to the Americans in trouble? I don't think there was outside help even during the San Francisco earthquake. Our neighbors have faced it alone and I'm one Canadian who's damned tired of hearing them kicked around. They will come out of this thing with their flag high and when they do, they are entitled to thumb their nose at the lands that are gloating over their present trouble. I hope Canada is not one of them, but there are many smug, self-righteous Canadians and finally. the American Red Cross was told at its 48 annual meeting in New Orleans, that it was broke. This year's disasters have taken it all and nobody, but nobody has helped"

His words swept the entire nation like a prairie fire and quelled all the negative sentiments towards the United States by the end of the week. His text was published as an LP single after a radio station placed background music behind it. "Bridge Over Troubled Waters". Proceeds for the sales of every one of these records were donated, at the insistence of Bro. Sinclair, to the American Red Cross. Then a zealous broadcaster read Gordon Sinclair's text with "the Battle Hymn of the Republic" as his background music, and released this as an LP single. Royalties from all sales of "The Americans" went to the Red Cross. They received millions of dollars in royalties and Gordon Sinclair was present at an awards ceremony recognizing his contribution.

Gordon Sinclair was dubbed "America's Dear Friend", and awarded several congressional accolades. At the insistence of the American people, "the Americans" was read into congressional records. He was invited to the ceremony of Ronald Reagan's presidential oath where he met with the new president who told him that he had a copy of "The Americans" at his ranch and that it has served as a source of inspiration and guidance throughout his political career.

Here was a man who recognized that things were not on the level. With his few simple words he made sure the Americans left on the square. As a young Freemason. I embrace the tenets of the order. I do not need a sticker on my car nor a plaque on my grave for people to know that I am a mason. I will let my deeds show and all who know me will know that I stand behind the tenets of the order. Let all who know you see that you too are the epitome of masonic conduct. Let them see relief truth, and brotherly love.

BANQUET NIGHT  
by Rudyard Kipling

Once in so often, King Solomon said,  
Watching his quarrymen drill the stone,  
We will club our garlic and wine and bread  
And banquet together beneath my Throne.  
And all the Brethren shall come to that mess  
As Fellow Craftsmen - no more and no less.  
9.

Send a swift shallop to Hiram of Tyre,  
Felling and floating our beautiful trees,  
Say that the Brethren and I desire,  
Talk with the Brethren who use the seas,  
And we shall be happy to meet them at mess  
As Fellow Craftsmen no more and no less.

Carry this message to Hiram Abif --  
Excellent Master of forge and mine --  
I and the Brethren would like it if  
He and the Brethren will come to dine  
(Garrnents from Bozrah or morning dress)  
As Fellow Craftsmen no more and no less.

God gave the Hyssop and Cedar their place --  
Also the bramble, the fig and the thorn --  
But that is no reason to black a man's face  
Because he is not what he hasn't been born,  
And, as touching the Temple, I hold and profess  
We are Fellow Craftsmen -- no more and no less.

So it was ordered and so it was done,  
And the hewers of wood and the Masons of Mark,  
With Foc'sle hands of the Sidon run  
And Navy Lords from the "Royal Ark"  
Came and sat down and were merry at mess  
As Fellow Craftsmen -- no more and no less.

The quarries are hotter than Hiram's forge,

No one is safe from the dop-whip's reach  
It's mostly snowing up Lebanon gorge,  
And it's always blowing off Joppa beach,  
But once in so often the messenger brings  
Solomon's mandate: Forget these things,  
Brother to Beggars and Fellow to Kings,  
Companions of Princes -- forget these things!  
Fellow Craftsmen, forget these things!  
\*\*\*\*\*