

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
650 Fisgard Sreet, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1R6
1996-6

The following Committee Report presented at the June 1996, British Columbia Grand Lodge Communication was also delivered at the November 19th, 1996, meeting of this Lodge by R. W. Bro. R. W. Headen, the Committee Chairman. It is followed by R. W. Bro. Headen's prognostication on the status of the Craft in B.C. if the recommendations are adopted and/or implemented

Report of Committee on Masonic Advancement

The Grand Master, MW Bro. Clark M. Gilmour, appointed a Committee on Masonic Advancement to study six issues and, after receiving submissions from all interested parties, to submit suitable resolutions and recommendations at the June 1996, Grand Lodge Communication. In brief these issues are:

1. Development of a Mission Statement;
2. Development of a Strategic Plan for this Grand Lodge;
3. Explore a plan to increase bursaries to deserving students;
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4. Study the appointment process of Grand Lodge Officers, particularly District Deputy Grand Masters, and to suggest alternatives;
5. Prepare a statement on "Freemasonry and Religion";
6. The transaction of Lodge Business in the E.A. degree.

Process

To obtain as much input as possible from interested brethren on these important issues, the Committee developed a Discussion Paper, reviewed it in draft form with the Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes and distributed it in October with a covering letter from the Grand Master through the DDGMS to the Secretaries of all 167 Lodges. Submissions were requested to be made by January 31, 1996 to allow for the input to be reviewed and analyzed by the Committee to enable a report to be prepared and distributed to all Lodges in May 1996.

Results of the Submissions

The Committee has been very pleased to receive and review a large number of quality submissions. Recognizing the very limited time available and the difficulties some may have experienced in being able to deal with these issues on short notice, the committee appreciates the high quality of individual submissions in particular which have put forward a number of good ideas and some clear messages from the brethren regarding our future direction.

Number of submissions received:

District submissions	4
Lodge submissions	63
Individual submissions	124
Total submissions	261

Generally:

This is what our brethren say:

We appreciate the Grand Master's initiative to place these issues before us for input

Don't make changes to the fundamentals of the Craft

Do make changes which will retain and regain the interest of members

Do not make it easier to become a Freemason - we need quality not quantity

Good public relations and community involvement is important
Our image is projected, to some extent, by the buildings we occupy
Members need and want more quality Masonic education
Don't let us try to be like another service club
Good leadership is vital - the key to our survival and growth
Increase benevolence, but make sure we look after our own members' needs
We must continue the work to move forward

ISSUE I- MISSION STATEMENT:

A Mission Statement describes an organization's reason for being. It implies a vision and a clear sense of purpose. A meaningful mission statement is developed through dialogue, consultation, and consensus.

The Committee on Masonic Advancement agrees with the brethren who, in their submissions, indicated their preference for a mission statement that is modern, concise, and easily understood by both our members and the public. There is support for the idea of printing the mission statement on the back of every brother's dues card.

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MISSION STATEMENT

"The Grand Lodge of British Columbia, as the parent organization of Freemasons, promotes and advances the Masonic fraternity in this jurisdiction and serves as a support system for individual Lodges by building a modern, dynamic organization with universal appeal, and creating a favourable climate for meaningful, organization change."

Strategic planning is the process of developing a plan to achieve the mission. The primary

objective of our strategic plan is to address the issues of declining membership and organizational change

Recommendation: This Committee recommends that this Mission Statement for the Grand Lodge of British Columbia be adopted

ISSUE 2- THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

We have established four broad strategic directions, which if actively pursued through the identified strategies, should advance in a material way the Mission of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia.

Strategic Direction 1 - To heighten the credibility of the Masonic fraternity

Strategies

1. Encourage Lodges to embrace the concept of meaningful change by developing their own visions of an ideal Lodge (see Appendix "A" for ideas).
2. Mount a public education program to dispel the old myths and inform the public about the work of our Craft.
3. Study the dynamics of successful Lodges and communicate keys to their success to the constituent Lodges.

4 etc.

Strategic Direction 2- To change the way Grand Lodge functions. Strategies

1. Strongly recommend that the Grand Lodge Principal Officers adopt a team management approach to pursue the goals of Grand Lodge.

2. Examine ways to more efficiently conduct the Annual Grand Lodge Communication.

3. etc.

Strategic Direction 3- To address the issue of leadership within the Craft.
Strategies

1. Study ways of attracting and retaining those who possess desired leadership qualities and encourage them to take positions of leadership within the Craft.

2. Sponsor regional and Lodge leadership programs for all Masons.

3. etc.

Strategic Direction 4- To create an organizational structure capable of assisting Lodges with membership concerns.

Strategies

I. Appoint a Grand Lodge Steering Committee whose task it will be to focus on the retention of existing members and the gaining of new ones.

2. Encourage each Lodge to build, assisted by their District Deputy Grand Master, their own plan for renewal.

3. Ensure that Masonic Advancement is an ongoing process.

4. etc

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Recommendations: The Committee recommends that the Strategic Plan be referred to the Principal Grand Lodge Officers for action; and that the Grand Master report results achieved at the June, 1997 Annual Communication.

The Committee recommends that one of the major duties of each D.D.G.M. is to promote masonic advancement in his District and to report achievements in his District in his Annual Report to the Grand Master.

ISSUE 3- PLAN TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE BURSARIES TO DESERVING STUDENTS

One of the tasks given to this Committee by the Grand Master was to consider increasing the size of the Bursary Fund capital account to permit the award of larger bursaries to deserving students from the increased income generated. From the submissions made to the Committee, it is clear that there is support for increasing the size of bursaries to meet the higher student costs.

To implement that decision requires the transfer of capital to the Bursary Fund capital account from the capital account of the Benevolent Fund, which can be used for such patriotic, benevolent and charitable purposes as Grand Lodge may, by resolution, determine. It is fair to say that the Trustees of the Benevolent Fund prefer that its capital be used for its prime purpose, i.e. to provide relief for the poor and distressed brethren and their dependents. It is a decision which Grand Lodge, having considered all the relevant circumstances, must make. As of April 30, 1995, the capital account of the Benevolent Fund amounted to \$935, 105 while the capital account of the Bursary Fund at the same date amounted to \$654,039

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that \$200,000 be transferred from the capital account of the Benevolent Fund to the capital account of the Bursary Fund. As notice of motion is required, notice of motion is hereby given that this recommendation in resolution form will be placed before Grand Lodge at the 1997 Annual Communication,

ISSUE 4- ROLE AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR GRAND LODGE OFFICERS

Submissions tended to favour the status quo concerning the appointment of Grand Lodge officers by the Grand Master. However, remarks on the selection of candidates for District Deputy Grand Master commonly suggested that there should

be broader representation from the Lodges in each District in the process.

Recommendation: That notice be given that the following Resolution will be presented at the Grand Lodge Communication in June, 1997: That section 74 (g) of the Book of Constitutions be deleted and the following substituted:

"After confidential consultation at a meeting to be attended by the Past D.D.G.M 's and the W.M. from each Lodge in his District, to submit to the Grand Secretary, not later than the first day of January in his year of office, three or more names of suitable candidates for appointment at the next Annual Communication of Grand Lodge to the office of District Deputy Grand Master for his District, from which names the incoming Grand Master may, if he sees fit, select a nominee.

(Note: significant change underlined)

ISSUE 5- STATEMENT ON FREEMASONRY AND RELIGION

Overwhelmingly, the statement in the Discussion Paper is accepted. Many suggested substituting "Supreme Being" for "God". The Committee agrees.
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Recommendation: That this Grand Lodge adopts the Statement on Freemasonry and Religion, shown in Appendix "C" to this report

ISSUE 6- DEGREE IN WHICH LODGE BUSINESS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED.

Responses from Lodges to the Discussion Paper were 70% in favour of providing the opportunity to conduct business in the Entered Apprentice degree. Individuals were 65% in favour.

Having considered all of the input, the Committee believes that individual Lodges should be empowered to make decisions which their members believe will assist them in achieving the membership goals.

The Committee endorses the majority view that Lodges should be empowered to determine the degree in which to conduct Lodge business at their option.

In exercising this option, the Committee sees no need to change existing rules regarding Master Masons only being permitted the privileges of attending Grand Lodge, voting, vouching for visitors, being assessed Per Capita dues, etc. As this is the same motion which was presented in Penticton in 1994, and that the Most Worshipful Grand Master in his acceptance speech in Prince George in 1995 charged the Committee to study and receive submissions on the transaction of business in the Entered Apprentice Degree, and as this Committee feels that adequate notice of motion has been given, this amendment meets the requirements of Section 258, providing for amending our Book of Constitutions, and this amendment is therefore submitted for decision by the brethren of this Grand Lodge.

Recommendation: That section 178 of the Book of Constitutions be amended as follows:

"Each Lodge shall have the option of transacting business in the Entered Apprentice degree or in the Master Mason degree, except for the conferring of degrees and the instruction or examination of candidates which shall be transacted in a lodge at labour in the appropriate degree."

Acknowledgements

The Committee wishes to express its thanks to all the brethren who participated

in sessions

designed to submit their views on these important issues. Those brethren who made individual submissions are also thanked for their well considered ideas and elaboration on the issues. Extracts from many of these fine submissions should, we believe, be shared with all brethren throughout this Grand Jurisdiction by publishing them in the Masonic Bulletin. Special thanks are also extended to the staff of the Grand Secretary's Office for the extra burden placed on them in forwarding a considerable volume of mail to the Committee members, and for their work in assisting the Committee in the publishing and distribution of this Report.

Conclusion: This Committee recommends that this report, and the recommendations it contains, be accepted.

Fraternally submitted by Committee on Masonic Advancement

RW Bro.R. William Headen, Chair RW Bro Donald Brown RW Bro

William Carter

RW Bro Jack Harper

W Bro William MacDonald

Bro

Robert Prince

MW Bro William Stirling

W. Bro Brian Tuckey

Appendices -

"A" - Some suggestions for building a "Vision of an Ideal Lodge"

"B" - Notable quotes from submissions

"C" Statement on Freemasonry and Religion

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Appendix "A"

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR BUILDING A "VISION OF AN IDEAL LODGE"

As a guide, we should ask ourselves what our duties are:

- to our Lodges - to our candidates
- to each other - to our families
- to our visitors - to Grand Lodge and our sister Lodges -
- to our surrounding communities.

The following are some excerpts of suggestions taken from the submissions received:

- by making meetings interesting and educational where every brother has the opportunity to participate and contribute to the Lodge
- to create an atmosphere where brethren can enjoy and share in each other's company
- where brethren can become involved in charitable projects
- where more social events are held that involve family and friends
- where we can take pride in our Lodge Room and our buildings we meet in
- where visitors are always received with open arms and are never made to feel unwelcome
- where those who become members are made to feel they have joined a fraternity that is special.

The following references will be most valuable in identifying some of the attributes that make an "Ideal Lodge";

Reception of Visitors - see Lodge Officers' Guide 1995.

- Conduct in the Lodge Room - see Lodge Officers' Guide 1995
- Helpful suggestions for Worshipful Master - see Lodge Officers' Guide
- Charge to the Brethren - Book of Forms and Ceremonies

APPENDIX "B"

Quotes from various Submissions

"The Mission Statement of Grand Lodge of BC should be:

To preserve and nurture Freemasonry in British Columbia by providing exemplary leadership and ready guidance while maintaining strict adherence to its basic tenets and principles.

In addition, every constituent lodge in the jurisdiction should have a mission statement as well. A lodge's performance in living up to its mission statement should be part of the annual DDGM's report. Which raises the question, "What becomes of the DDGM's report, anyway?" Is the lodge on which the report is made ever made aware of its deficiencies? Is there a "bring forward" system where problematic lodges or deficiencies can be carried forward for the attention or surveillance of the next DDGM?

"Freemasonry must focus on the individual talent of every member."

Our pursuit of Masonic Advancement must embrace some basic fundamentals. We must understand the words we use; we must understand the people; and we must be careful of change. We need people with vision; we need courage; we need objectivity; we need simplicity; we need patience. We need a global outlook, and we need to be "they" oriented.

What we don't need is hasty decision making, continued apathy, and a lack of leadership at the lodge, District and Grand Lodge levels.

28.

It isn't Freemasonry that must change - it is US that must change! Freemasonry has survived longer than any other thing on this earth and it will survive this decline in membership.

We have assumed that there is something wrong with Masonry, when in fact, it is something that has changed in society in general. How we deal with a different world is not our problem alone, and I do not presume that the observations noted in this (submission) recognize the total nature of the problem -they are only one brother's opinion. Our society has changed, and times have changed, but they always do. The secret is that we too must change, but only after careful deliberation and commitment."

"Lodges could do more to please their brethren."

"Suggestions - more social events involving spouses; more openness and publicity; there are too many recesses, examine membership requirements, improve leadership; GL officers should be more visible."

"Need shorter, more interesting meetings - a program"

"Spread ritual work - increase overall participation"

"Excellence in ritual." "Education - sense of purpose - action" "Don't overload prominent people." "Festive Board is important" "Work on fellowship and fun"

"The solution to organizational problems - GL must lead - needs to be bottom-up driven"

APPENDIX "C"

STATEMENT ON FREEMASONRY AND RELIGION

Basic Principles

Freemasonry is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for religion. It requires of its members a belief in a Supreme Being as part of the obligation of every responsible adult, but advocates no sectarian faith or practice. Masonic ceremonies include prayers, both traditional and extempore, to reaffirm each individual's dependence on his Supreme Being and to seek Divine guidance. Freemasonry is open to men of any faith, but religion may not be discussed at Masonic meetings.

The Supreme Being

Masons believe that there is one Supreme Being and that people employ many different ways to seek and to express what they know of their Supreme Being. Masonry primarily uses the appellation "Grand Architect of the Universe", and other non-sectarian titles to address Deity. In this way, persons of different faiths may join together in prayer, concentrating on their Supreme Being rather than differences among themselves. Freemasonry believes in religious freedom and that the relationship between the individual and his Supreme Being is sacred, personal and private.

Volume of the Sacred Law

An open Volume of the Sacred Law, 'The Rule and Guide of our Life', is an essential part of every Masonic meeting. The Volume of the Sacred Law to a Christian is a Bible; to Freemasons of other faiths, it is the Book held Holy by them.

The Oath of Freemasonry

The Obligations taken by Freemasons are sworn on the Volume of the Sacred Law. They are undertakings to follow the principles of Freemasonry and to keep confidential a Freemasons' means of recognition. The "Penalties" - judicial remnants of an earlier era - are symbolic, not literal. They refer only to the pain any honest man should feel at the thought of violating his word.

Freemasonry compared with Religion

Freemasonry lacks the basic elements of Religion.

- 1) It has no dogma or theology, no wish or means to enforce religious orthodoxy.
- 2) It offers no sacraments.
- 3) It does not claim to lead to salvation by works, by secret knowledge, or by any other means. The secrets of Freemasonry are concerned with modes of recognition, not with the means of salvation.

Freemasonry supports Religion

Freemasonry is far from indifferent towards Religion. Without interfering in religious practice, it expects each member to follow his own faith and to place his duty to his Supreme Being above all other duties. Its moral teachings are acceptable to all religions.

A Vision of 2006

Mission of Grand Lodge is being accomplished Measurable Results;

50 % Know of Freemasons

75 % Favourable opinion of them

3 % Would consider joining

80 % of buildings reflect right Image

Lodge consolidations continue:

150 Lodges

Districts have been strengthened:

DDGMs now serve 2 year terms
Active support to Lodges provided
Masonic Help Links established
Community charities supported
Run own education programs.
Secretarial support to Lodges
District social functions are successful

Our Lodges flourish:

Many have four dinner meetings
Degree work is excellent
District degree teams are formed
Routine business is summarized
Minutes are circulated with notices
Informal lunch meetings with invited speakers are common
All members are expected to participate
Meetings are interesting, never dull
A balance of Masonic events and family is achieved
Grand Lodge changes continue:
Annual Communication is available to many districts by videoconference
Workshops now held in conjunction
District support is provided
GL Officers actively support advancement
Processes are streamlined
Communication and leadership potentials abound
