

MOTIVATION OF LODGE MEMBERS IN MASONIC ACTIVITIES

This paper has been adapted from a paper given at The Southwest Masonic Conference several years ago by R.W. Bro. Ronald A. Brinkman Grand Secretary of New Mexico. His enthusiasm, optimism and action is contagious. We Thank him for sharing these thoughts wish

MOTIVATION is the word. It is hoped this paper will create interest, debate, discussion, and possibly even a good argument, whereby together we may begin to see the light that surely appears at the end of a dark tunnel through which our Craft seems to be traveling. Motivation implies movement. It means the difference in getting up and doing something rather than just sitting there and doing nothing or letting someone else do it that is apathy and indifference. Webster defines motivation as "causing or having the power to cause motion; an impulse from within. "

If we feel as we say we do regarding our Fraternity, let's do something rather than just talk about it and appoint a committee to report back next year and the next.... This Conference has been meeting for 28 years. Numerous subjects have been presented in that time covering various areas of our operation. Many have skirted declining numbers, indifferent leadership and so on. But I found none which said directly, "Hey, we have a real problem, let's do something now!"

Some time ago Chief Justice Warren Burger in addressing the American Bar Association quoted the great Masonic writer and Jurist, Dean Roscoe Pound of the Harvard Law School, as saying in 1906, "The courts of the 20th Century cannot operate on the laws of the 19th Century." My brethren, are we so operating?

At this Conference and others around the Nation through the years, including the Conferences of Grand Masters, many speakers have been saying or implying that we are not concerned about numbers; that we want QUALITY in our ranks. This has been so often repeated, that it sounds a little like the small boy who said, "I don't believe in ghosts but I'm still afraid of them. "

The fear of change does strange things to people. It has been known to close their eyes, tie their hands and stop them from thinking. No one seems to want to rock the boat; perhaps it is time that we do a little rocking. He who was called a radical a few years ago is rapidly becoming just another old conservative "stick in the mud". We can't do that! Why not?.... Well, we just never have. Well, maybe we should . . . or later on we may not have the opportunity. This Fraternity cannot live and thrive on the stories of its great and glorious past. If we do, we may be not long for this world. Pessimistic, you say. Well, perhaps a little; but let me tell you that for many years I have been traveling for our Order and much of my time is spent with officers and members of the local lodges, not just with those who direct and govern the policy of our Grand Lodge; and I think I see it as it really is; not as how we would like to see it. I have attended lodge unrecognized as a Grand Lodge Officer in a number of States, including yours; I have seen the

problems (challenges) at the grass roots level and that is where we had better get the job done. We're in a rut, particularly in the rural areas; and the only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth of the hole. If our efforts have failed in the past, perhaps we are fortunate; now we know some of the things NOT to do. We have a lodge that finally presented a 50 year pin to a Past Grand Lodge Officer over two years late at the insistence of those in authority. Another case where the past due recipient was hospitalized; then died before they got around to presenting the pin. This is our "dirty laundry" of which we are not proud; perhaps your Jurisdiction has some of the same.

For a number of years surveys have been made into the challenges of our time. A few years ago I had the privilege of serving on a Membership Committee which studied conditions in our Jurisdiction for a year and then reported at Grand Lodge. We found many things we considered wrong and poorly handled. We endeavored to tell it like it was, without pretty phrases. Finally, we concluded with a number of suggestions. Now, several years later none of these 14 ideas are by and large being used by lodges, nor did Grand Lodge take any action where possible legislation was indicated.

North Carolina is one of those jurisdictions where gains were continuing and conditions appeared healthy. A past Grand Master, William Hooks, in addressing the Shrine gave two reasons for part of their status. One, minimizing the secret aspects of our Order to the public, and secondly, the unity and mutual cooperation between Craft Masonry and the appendant bodies; he said that the latter is a must.

Many of you, perhaps a majority, are members of, have been active in, and honored by one or more of the various bodies that predicate membership on the Blue Lodge. However, in my travels, I often observe that many such brethren are too busy to lend their time, talents, efforts and attendance at functions of the Mother Lodge, from whom their organizations derive candidates. I heard of a Potentate who asked his Nobles to HUMBLE themselves and attend Blue Lodge.

A Grand Master of California scheduled several area meetings throughout his State to which were invited the Master Masons who had been raised in his year. At each meeting the Grand Master explained the relationship between the Grand Lodge and the constituent lodge and covering the activities and programs of the various committees of the Grand Lodge. He also gave each group a brief history of Masonry in that Jurisdiction and then advised them as to their duties and responsibilities to their lodge and to their brethren in Freemasonry. Apparently these new brethren were eager to learn more of our Craft, as in many cases the meetings were prolonged by many questions asked of Grand Master. When a new Mason is motivated to learn more about our organization, often some lodge Officer or Grand Lodge Officer has been directly responsible.

The need for interested candidates is always with us; it always has been. If every petitioner was as enthusiastic as we would have him, there would be no hue and cry about declines, attendance, and Masonic Education; for there are always those who of their own accord seek knowledge, light and education. The problem then, is to extend our circle of light further into the multitude of our membership. One of the best ways to do this is by example. Let our light really shine in all places and at all times. As stated by M.W. Brother Hooks, "We should tell the world what

Freemasonry is, what it teaches, what it stands for; and we should get this message across to every Mason in every Grand Jurisdiction . "

A few years ago at this Conference, R.W. Claude Austin, (PGM, Tex.) commented "Let's put some of this talk into action . . . we need action . . . I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one any day. I'd rather one would walk with me than merely show the way. I can soon learn how to do it, if you will let me see it done."

How many times in the 28 years of this Conference have we gone home and seen to it that each of the newspapers in our major cities of our five states have been given extensive coverage about what Masons are trying to do for the good of our Nation, mankind in general and what we really stand for?

Success in the business world is based on motivation; these same factors can be applied to Masonry where the wages are satisfaction, pride in a job well done, the inner glow of personal accomplishment and something good done for one's fellow man. Efficiency is a dandy word for the other fellow; but let's put on that hat ourselves and start where we should start, with number one . . . ME . . . all the Masonic Education and candidate training available will not help if we at this level do not implement it in those lodges which think they have neither the know-how nor personnel to get the message across, so take the easy way out and do nothing. Sometimes these lodges feel alone and not really an integral part of our Masonic Family; I believe that some change in this area is a must. It is results that count, not oratory at Conferences and at Grand Lodge.

Efficiency takes imagination; and imagination goes hand in hand with initiative. Imagination is not necessarily being far out and impossible. Imagination can be the difference between routine and real progress. Originate and Invent ideas and then give them a hell of a try. Nearly everything in our modern world today is the result of imagination. Technology; medicine; space flight; communication. That which is now in use was once only imagined.

Action is the key word; and enthusiasm is necessary to create action. Let's get a piece of the action. Our own action, if you please, and create the action, not wait for it to come to us. Let's stop talking high sounding phrases and do something NOW!

I first said that I couldn't tell you how to motivate but hoped to stir you enough to stand on your hind legs and discuss IDEAS; for it is ideas that motivate action. If I have accomplished nothing more than a good debate, today, I'm satisfied and rewarded.

My brethren, I'm a little like the lad digging frantically in the large manure pile.... with all of this here for me to dig in . . . there must be a pony somewhere. For years I have been accused of being an enthusiastic cock-eyed optimist; well maybe I am; but I just can't believe that all of this talent can or will permit our beloved Fraternity to become second rate or sink into oblivion. Are you a Master Mason? . . . The Candidate answered enthusiastically, "I AM!" . . . If you were brought to trial for being a Mason, would there be enough evidence to convict you?