



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

December 24, 2010

The Call to Arms

(With apologies to Patrick Henry's speech of 1775)

By Dave Rosenberg, DDGM Dist #59, PG #169

Independent Order of Odd Fellows

Members of the Order, it is natural to people to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth. Is this the part of wise men and women, engaged in a great and arduous struggle to preserve this Order? Are we disposed to be of the number of those, who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. Let us not, I beseech you, deceive ourselves longer. We have certainly done some things to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have remonstrated, we have uttered slogans, we have created committees, all to staunch the loss of members of this Order and to curtail the closing of our Lodges. Our remonstrations have gone unheeded, our slogans have been ignored, our committees have been largely disregarded, and the foot of demise is at our throats. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of growth and prosperity of our Order. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be a free and progressive Order – if we mean to preserve inviolate these inestimable privileges for which we have so long contended – if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon, until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained – we must evolve and change! An appeal to arms in this struggle is all that is left us.

They tell us that we are weak – our membership waning after 66 years of decline – unable to cope with so formidable an adversary as complacency. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed and our Lodges nearly abandoned? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until complacency has completely bound us hand and foot?



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We are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature has placed in our power. There are still 5,000 members of our Order in this jurisdiction. In such Lodges as we still possess, we are invincible by any force which complacency sends against us. Besides, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of us all. But it is upon us to raise up friends – new members of our Lodges – who shall join us to fight and our battle against complacency. The battle is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.

It is in vain to extenuate the matter. Some may cry, “stay the course” – but our experience over the past 66 years proves that the current course leads inevitably to the demise of our beloved Order. The battle has actually begun! There are Brothers and Sisters already in the field and in the fight! Why stand we here idle? What is it that you wish? What would you have us do? Is the way of the past so dear, is repeating the ritual so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of closures and consolidations of Lodges, of continued losses of members? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me change or give me death!