



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

February 25, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Here are some thoughts as you contemplate the future of our Order.

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WORDS I WOULD RATHER NOT HEAR IN THE LODGE

By Dave Rosenberg

When I first joined this great order eight years ago, I remember attending Lodge meetings where we could barely muster 10 members. The members who attended were 6 or 7 of the "old-timers" (long-time members of the Order who were in their 70's and 80's), 1 or 2 "journeymen" (members who had about 3 or 4 years of membership under their belts), and 2 or 3 of us "new-comers" (newly initiated members who, in reality, had limited knowledge of the Order),

I have distinct memories of those early days. At the time, the Lodge, basically, did little more than have formal meetings twice each month, considered donating relatively small amounts of money to local charities and causes (e.g. \$25 to the local boy scouts) and to Odd Fellows charities (\$50 to the Children's Home), and spend about 6 months in planning a spaghetti dinner. I also have memories of us newcomers - fresh and shiny - suggesting all sorts of things at the meetings, primarily under the "new business" agenda. However, the clearest memories of these early days are the memories of the words spoken by the old-time members each and every time one of us new members made a suggestion.

You may have heard words like these in your own Lodges.

Here are the words that were spoken by the old-time members in response to the new members' suggestions:

"We can't do that."

"That's against the Code."



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"We tried that before - it doesn't work."

"That's not the way it's done."

"That's a stupid idea."

Can you imagine how discouraging (insulting even) these words are to a new-comer? Some of our new members, after hearing the negative and dismissive attitudes, simply never came back to meetings and quietly left the Order, soon after initiation. But, fortunately, I never did - and others hung in there as well. And, to be fair, we had one of the old-timers who had the courage to stand up to his colleagues, and push back a bit - giving the Order's new blood the opportunity to make suggestions, discuss ideas, plan things, make some mistakes, and actually change the way the Lodge functioned. Our Lodge became active, and that attracted new members. And eventually, the old-timers stopped being so negative.

So the moral of this little story is that if you hear words spoken like those above, push back a little. No idea is stupid. Just because it's never been done, doesn't mean it shouldn't be tried. Even though it's been done a certain way in the past, doesn't mean that this is the best way. Merely because it's been tried in the past and failed, there is no law that says it can't be tried again in the future. And just because someone says "it's against the Code" doesn't mean that it is - one should actually check the Code to see.

Let's resolve to be more positive and supportive in our Lodge meetings, not so negative and dismissive.