



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

July 18, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Attached is an important article written by one of the three founders of DMC and the current Grand Master of California Rick Boyles. Rick is a progressive Grand Master who is not afraid to challenge the status quo or to question the "whys" and the "hows" of our current status. In the attached article, Rick looks at the future of our Order and the role of the elected Grand Lodge officers. If, in fact, we elect these people to actually "lead" our Order, shouldn't we give them the time and ability to do so?

I commend Grand Master Rick's insightful commentary to you.

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Dave Rosenberg, GW

The Future of our Order and the Role of Our Elective Officers

Being Grand Master this year is a tremendous honor and I am very proud of my position. However, it has also been a learning experience as to what encompasses my role. Besides the 20 – 50 emails I receive daily, I often field complaints regarding issues I have little or no awareness about. I suppose this is unavoidable as by code (all codes) the Grand Master is the last word on all fraternal issues. In my mind, the question in our state, is exactly how do we want our elective officers to perform their duties? In my year, I am scheduled to visit 42 lodges, which is one third of all lodges, however, I am concerned that we often give our elective officers busy work and not the work that should be done. Presently, I have been approached by a lady who would like to open a new lodge, yet because of my other duties, I am forced to delay helping her until I have a free couple of days. To me, this is not the way things should be done. I would drop other duties but there is always someone out there who says that in days gone by, the Grand Master did everything, but in the State of California it is difficult to do everything and in fact, it is counterproductive. We are at a pivotal time in our history right now. The question we should ask ourselves is not whether or not we are open to change, but when we are going to do it? There is simply no way around it. Some of our other groups, the Patriarchs Militant, the Grand Encampment, the Juniors, the Theta Ro, are shrinking. Do we really think that they will show



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much progress unless we concentrate on them directly? The fact that the Grand Master and his entourage are running from point A to point B may seem impressive but to me it seems like we are marching like lemmings into the sea. Now, don't say that I bring this up because I want to make my own year easier, because it will not affect my year. Sooner or later, we have to look at the bigger picture. We have to see that our order is shrinking and rather than having snacks with people we have had snacks with 1,000 times before, we should be out in the public arena wearing sandwich boards announcing our presence, because this is what we have lost. We are losing our connection to the outside world.

Now, take a look at the real numbers of our order in our state. I say in our state because other states are already much more dire than ours. Most if not all of our lodges experience only a small percentage of attendees at every meeting. Why? For any number of reasons, but the results are the same. Here are the real attendance numbers of our order in California: The number is actually quite small. Many of the lodges meet with barely a quorum: many of the others with 10 – 15; and then, only a handful over that amount. So, if you figure 40 - 50 meet with 5 members = 250 members. 50 meet with 10 members = 500 members, and lastly 22 meet with 15 - 30 members = 450, that only gives an active total of 1200 members! Bad as that sounds, I think it is pretty near the mark. So, you see when we quote our state as having 4500 to 5000 members, only ¼ are active!

So then, let's return to the earlier issue: what do the elective officers, the elected heads of our fraternal side, do to slow or stop this decline? I agree that they should be big on pushing events and encouraging enthusiasm on all fronts, but the issue becomes muddied when the Grand Master spends much of his or her time running to lodges that a year or two from now may be closed completely. To be perfectly frank, a lodge just surrendered their charter because they could not get a quorum even though they were meeting in a member's living room. Members, things are dire. And, if you truly believe that the Grand Master and his entourage travelling throughout the state on a madcap rush to meet with every lodge is the answer, why has it never worked before? I submit that it does not work unless the Grand Master and officers were to reside at that lodge and that baring that, they would not have any real idea how that lodge operates. 95% of the time, lodges rule themselves. There is no easy fix for this, and the only quick fix a Grand Lodge Officer may suggest is closure. The truth of life is this: failure is easy, success takes effort. Just paying a lodge a visit does nothing beyond taking a photo of a place in time.

A couple years ago, our districts were realigned, and this was to make them more equitable with one another. This was inevitable. Now, we need to take more strides towards our future. Many have talked about modern technologies such as skype, and interconnecting the lodges. I suggest that in the near future, we need to deal with this in depth and stop expecting our shuttling



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Grand Lodge Officers to save our order, because it is not the proverbial “I” that will save our order it is the proverbial “we”.

In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rick Boyles, Grand Master