



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

January 24, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Sometimes it's useful to hear the observations from abroad. Below is an e-mail I recently received from an Odd Fellow who resides outside of the United States - about his observations of U.S. and California Lodges. Food for thought, brothers and sisters, food for thought.

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Dave Rosenberg  
Grand Warden

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Brother Dave,

I do hope all this in-fighting and being mean to each other will someday diminish within the Order here in the United States. It is a bit obvious that one of the ancient purposes of Odd Fellows which we adapted from the practices of the guilds - improving members' morals (character) - has been long forgotten by several members of our Order in United States.

It is true that no organization is perfect. That there are always two sides in everything. But how are we dealing with these differences? We now see members shouting at each other and insulting each other face-to-face or behind each others' backs. We have progressives versus conservatives. Old members versus younger members. Men versus women. Whites versus non-whites. We can read in reports of several members stealing money - some stole lots of money. We see members who do not want to get younger members involved in their lodge because they want the Lodges' funds by themselves. Have we lost the principles of Odd Fellowship? It is a shame for outsiders like me (Odd Fellows from other countries) to notice and witness these kind of troubles within lodges and Grand Lodges in various States. Some members from other countries once told me, "For an Order that professes friendship, love and truth, it is ironic to see what our Order in the U.S. has become". One of the reasons the Order is failing in the U.S. is, in fact, having members who can "drive away" people from joining.

For an Order that says "Improve and Elevate the Character of Mankind" and "Make the world a better place", are we really practicing what we preach? Does this mean that the teachings in our rituals are ineffective? How come we see members being jealous with each other when our first degree alone teaches us of real friendship? How come we see members not wanting to help members and people in need and, in worst cases, hating each other when the second degree teaches us about brotherly/sisterly love?

I've been so enthusiastic about the Odd Fellows. I believe its a great fraternity and I still do (historically speaking). I believe it is one of the oldest humanitarian institutions that existed and I



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do not want to see it fade. But it is a lie if I do not admit that I had told myself to quit the Order a few months ago after witnessing members being mean to each other, and in some cases, being mean to other people (non-members). I was shocked of what I have seen and one time, I told myself "This is not the Order I was looking for". I am still holding on. . . .

*"The world is a much more pleasant place if people are nice to one another. By being decent people. By not belittling others to make oneself feel better. By lending a hand when someone needs help. By willing to forgive and asking forgiveness if one have to..."*