



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

September 8, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Following is another article from Rick Boyles, one of the founders of DMC and the Junior Past Grand Master of California. The focus is all about membership, and growth, and change. Our Lodges cannot just be composed of our uncles, and cousins, and nephews. No offense to uncles, cousins, and nephews. But, ultimately, we must diversify in our Lodges if we are to grow our Order.

Hope you enjoy the article!

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

Politics and the Onset of Ritualistic Boredom with a Historical Perspective

When I first joined our order quite a few years back, a Past Grand Master warned me about the touchiness of members. He said that members want to control their areas and don't want intrusion by any outsiders. I have generally found this to be true. Even at that time, he said that the order was being split apart by petty disagreements and turf battles. There are many lodges in our state that not only don't want new members, they would not know what to do if they got one, particularly if it was one other than a relative or a friend. That is why so many lodges seem so incestuous. A fellow member joked that some lodges practice in-breeding. While that is, of course, a gross exaggeration, we do have lodges in California where virtually everyone in the lodge is related to other members. While we may think this is okay we must also realize that this makes a lodge less able to adapt to change. And, it might be suggested, that where a family or close-knit group of members makes up the majority of a lodge structure, that lodge may survive, it also makes that lodge one-dimensional. And it must be noted, that when that family or group leaves, quits, dies or otherwise, the lodge inevitably closes. Our search for members is not just to add digits to the whole but to strengthen each and every unit. So, it becomes incumbent upon us all to search for the unique member, the individual personality, the free-thinker. Isn't the first important word of our name "Independent"?

The idea that there is some type of political debate about whether or not we want or need new members is one of the most absurd things I have ever experienced in my life. And those of us who don't want new members try to use everything we can as a bludgeon to prevent new



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members from joining such as brandishing our ritual, our codes, our tired chants, and anything we can do to beat or bore new people to death. Nothing in our long history was written with the idea of discouraging new members. But in fact, it is not new members we dread rather we fear a change in our own personal agendas.

A look at some popular political quotes in the outside world would show a more proper point of view. We have to remember to keep politics in its place. Our old Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill said "after 5 o'clock we are all the same" and "all politics is local" while President Ronald Reagan said, "There are no constraints on the human mind, no walls around the human spirit, no barriers to our progress except those we ourselves erect" and "If we love our country, we should also love our countrymen". The point that should be evident is that we must leave politics in its place and remember that membership; friend-ship, love and truth are really in the forefront. In order to persevere, we all have to get along and these mindless squabbles about what type of member we want or need serves no purpose beyond the wasting of time or to embellish some poor character's delusion of grandeur. Our order in its wisdom decided to reward almost every member with a title of one type or another; there is no magic title that empowers a member to bully another member, disrespect them or make them feel unwelcome. In order for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows to survive we have to remember that all are welcome, all are loved and all are entitled to respect. Take a look at the outside world; no longer are we as a culture governed by White Anglo Saxon Protestants. We as a country are governed by people best suited for their jobs. We judge people by their hearts and souls, not by the color of their skin, their sexual orientation, their rhetoric, or their title. It's time to emulate the modern world.

In Friendship, Love, & Truth, Rick Boyles