



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

September 25, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

On September 10, 2014, I sent out an article in this newsletter entitled "The Sovereign Grand Lodge is Structured for Failure". I raised several points highlighting how the SGL is set up to maintain the status quo and to resist change. While maintaining the status quo was just dandy in the 19th Century, and even in the beginning of the 20th Century, when this Order was in growth mode - it is singularly inappropriate in the late 20th Century and now in the 21st Century when the Order is in serious and steady decline.

This Order has to adjust to a new world and to new (potential) members with modern interests. The basic tenets and teachings of Odd Fellowship are, of course, timeless. But if we continue to teach them in stuffy Lodges that are out of touch with 21st Century reality, we will wind up teaching them only to ourselves. And that will be a shame. We need to attract the young energy and enthusiasm of new members in their 20's, 30's and 40's. But moribund Lodges that have forgotten how to have a good time in the social atmosphere of the fraternal Lodge, and have failed to reach out into their communities with good works are not going to attract new members.

As I pointed out in my September 10 article, the SGL is unrepresentative of the membership, heavily favoring very small jurisdictions at the expense of jurisdictions which have the bulk of the members. In fact, SGL gives the same number of votes to jurisdictions that have 200 members as is given to jurisdictions which have 20 times that membership. How is that fair or equitable? The article also noted that SGL moves incredibly slowly - new ideas are buried for years and never see the light of day. The article pointed out how SGL elevates form over substance. And the article also noted that SGL operates in an antiquated way - far removed from the electronic age.

I have received a fair amount of feedback on this article, and that's good. The purpose of the exercise was to get some dialog going. And it did.

I'd like to highlight one of the e-mails I received in response to this article. It was written by a gentleman who I highly respect, and who has the respect of Odd Fellows throughout California. He is a unique individual who served as Grand Master of California for two terms, and is also beginning a term as Grand Patriarch of California (a distinction held by only five men in the history of Odd Fellowship in this state). What is particularly poignant and unique about the comments, below, is the fact that this gentleman is very traditional, very conservative, and highly respectful of the history, heritage, tradition, and ritual of this Order. The comments,



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below, were written by PGM Gene Breeland:

Dave,

Thank you for the thoughtful and dead on article. Coming from the largest jurisdiction in the order, and having attended SGL; I can say with certainty that there are a core of members at that level whose sole purpose is to see that nothing gets changed and that any new or radical idea is successfully pushed aside or covered up so it never sees the light of day. These are members from small jurisdictions who unite with others from like sized jurisdictions for self preservation who do not see themselves as the problem, and therefore criticize anyone who offers an idea counter to their own thinking as being against true fraternalism. They will continue to sit in the dark, robed, repeating their Gregorian Chants as the order decays around them. A truly sad situation. Perhaps it is time for a revolution, the beginning of a new order. My thoughts.

Gene Breeland, PGM

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Dave Rosenberg  
Deputy Grand Master