



## Director of Masonic Education

*Bro..... you have been appointed (or elected) Director of Masonic Education for this Lodge and I now invest you with the Jewel of your office. The Lamp of Learning should be the light that guides our footsteps along the path of life and lead us to true Masonic Light. It will be your duty to initiate informative discussion, when requested to do so by the Worshipful Master, and instruct the Brethren in the principles of our Order.*

*Installation, Canadian Work, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon*

### *THE DIRECTOR OF MASONIC EDUCATION*

*“...to initiate Masonic discussion and debate amongst the Brethren...” You are important to the masonic education of the members of your lodge. It is through you that the educational program is directed, with instruction from your Worshipful Master. You should plan a well rounded educational program for the year, offering topics of interest to the brother who is the youngest in Freemasonry as well as to the brother who has attended lodge for many years. You should assist the coaches in responding to questions asked by the candidates. Invite well skilled and knowledgeable brethren of your lodge, district or jurisdiction to present topics which are informative as well as those which involve the brethren in healthy discussions. It is important that your presentations are in harmony with a full program of the evening. Short five minute talks are as interesting as well researched papers. Be observant of your audience and gauge the length of your presentations accordingly. Being one of the officers of the lodge, your attendance at all Communications is essential.*

*Lodge Officers Guide, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon*

## DIRECTOR OF MASONIC EDUCATION JEWEL



LAMP OF LEARNING

# THE NEED FOR MASONIC EDUCATION

by **Raymond Hollins**

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*Better be ignorant of a matter, than half know it"*  
*- Publilius Syrus 1st. Century BC*

The making of a Freemason does not consist entirely of his progress through the various Degrees of the Order. Receiving these various degrees is in itself only the "Passport to Knowledge". This can be described as the key to a continuing course of Masonic education.

Whilst it may be accepted that it is an innermost desire, followed by obligations that makes one a member of the Craft, yet in a truer form and better sense, a man is never a Freemason until he truthfully and loyally lives up to his obligations.

He cannot do that until he understands them, and eventually, following a Masonic programme of education, he learns to know their scope and real meaning.

This cannot be properly achieved by sitting in Lodge listening to ceremonies or attending a Lodge of Instruction (LOI), where the objective is primarily devoted to improve the performance of the ritualist. The ritual does not make Masons - it only makes members. Ritual is fundamental to the Craft, and its preservation in its purest form is the life's blood of our Fraternity, but it is not to be confused with Masonic education.

Freemasonry may well be divided into many phases. Its tenets, history, traditions, landmarks, customs, symbolism and its allegories - even its Constitution and its laws - just to mention a few.

If these subjects are studied and mastered they can provide a most interesting course for a Brother seeking the opportunity to gain Masonic knowledge, being quite apart from his rightful ambition to become a good ritualist. An educated Freemason needs to have accomplished both!

To suggest that a satisfactory explanation of the Craft is complete with a study of the lectures of each degree is to bury one's head in Masonic sand.

A popular expression in the teaching profession proclaims that there can be no dedication without education. The search for knowledge goes on day after day.

If we ask whether we need a Masonic education programme, the posture would be one of blank amazement followed by: "Well, we do have a LOI."

If we ask the same question to a few of our elderly and fairly senior brethren, whose involvement extends well beyond the Craft, the answer may be "NO" (on the mistaken belief that they have nothing to learn!)

But be assured, that if any of the following circumstances apply - then the answer must be "YES":

- Attendances have declined at meetings;
- Membership has declined due to resignations;
- Candidates are non-existent;
- Lodge programmes are uninspiring, dull and uninteresting;
- The Lodge is not considered to be a vital part of the community;
- Provincial Grand Lodge activities are sparsely attended;
- Prospects for the future survival of the Lodge is bleak.

Other factors can be added to this list. Each Lodge will be able to identify and determine where its own weaknesses lie. So we need an educational training programme - but how do we go about it?

The answer, as with virtually all management problems, starts at the top - the Master. On his Installation, the Master is charged to manage his Lodge, and he is reminded of this at every meeting, at the opening of his Lodge:

"As the sun rises in the East to open and enliven the day, so the W.M is placed in the East to open the Lodge and to employ and instruct the Brethren in Freemasonry"

But does he?

Every Lodge has members who, with proper encouragement and training, will be willing to take

the time necessary to become a Masonic teacher, the Lodge educationalist. LOI Preceptors have proved this. However, to become such an expert requires training. There is no such thing as a born Masonic educationalist. In fact, it is time we started to train the trainers. It is regrettable that little or nothing in this regard is available and in place as part of a proper educational and training policy within our Constitution. One fundamental issue is that it is not essential to any concept of Masonic education that its possessor be a good ritualist. Masonic ritual has its own reward, and many find those rewards great. Our LOIs are full of Brethren who excel at the ritual. But what is a Masonic educational programme, how do we introduce it, and where can I find an example?

An example is the training and education programme of the Masonic Province of Worcestershire, which has one prime aim - to help Masons understand, enjoy and be confident in their masonry, and by this to retain them in the Craft.

Over the last ten years the Province has developed a programme with an emphasis on helping brethren understand, perform and be comfortable in the various offices and roles in which they will find themselves in their progression towards the chair. Many brethren find ritual and the associated learning difficult and they can often be the most dedicated and committed Masons. But someone who is nervous, uncomfortable and unsure is not going to enjoy his Masonry and is certainly not going to convey any enjoyment to others. Thus seminars have been introduced entitled "Towards the Master's Chair", "The Role and Work of the Junior Officers", "The Director of Ceremonies" as well as training sessions for treasurers, secretaries and almoners. These programmes are well attended and very popular.

A history of the Craft and the Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire, entitled Freemasonry - Fact not Fiction written by Joe Grainger, is presented to every initiate, and provides the basis for an ongoing programme of training and education throughout the Province. Worcestershire is encouraging the establishment of Provincial Lodge of Instruction Festivals to be held annually, where Entered Apprentices, Fellowcrafts and Master Masons and elders in the Craft work together to present an interesting and stimulating evening of Masonic interest. The Guild of Worcestershire Preceptors has been formed consisting of all the Preceptors, present and past of all the Lodges in the Province, as a forum for the members to discuss and disseminate information on good practice within those Lodges. By its nature it focuses on the practicalities of the ceremonies, but is also charged with stimulating a culture of learning and to advance the knowledge of the history, meaning and purpose of Freemasonry.

Last year saw the launch of the publication A Daily Advancement in Masonic Knowledge - Fifty Short Talks on the Craft - see <http://www.masonicshorttalks.com> The response and sales are now worldwide.

As the possessor of an historian in Richard Goddard as Provincial Grand Master, the implementation of these objectives is driven from the highest level. With what is said to be the finest Masonic museum outside of Grand Lodge, the Province regularly arranges guided tours of the museum. The many precious artefacts, jewels and books, are always on show. Visitors are always welcome.

Worcestershire Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge No. 9142 is actively engaged with a series of presentations that are intended to stimulate discussion about the content of our ritual, and a deeper and more fully understood appreciation of Freemasonry.

Worcestershire Installed Masters Lodge No. 6889 is extremely active and provides another forum for a programme of continuing Masonic education, being host over the years to a glittering array of speakers and demonstrations.

A recent initiative in many Lodges in the Province is to charge a senior member of the Lodge to be what is called a Master of Novices, or the Mentor. His role is to accompany junior brethren when they have to leave the Lodge room for some ceremonies or parts of ceremonies. They talk to them and prepare them for their next ceremony and help them understand the background and meaning of Masonry. A Seminar is being prepared to deal with the role and duties of such important responsibilities.

It is planned to produce a set of three booklets so that every Lodge can introduce a properly structured programme of informative training to run in parallel with the traditional LOI activities. This will provide a guide in the form of a series of informative notes about each of the three degrees. This publication will be expanded later to include a guide for every office in the Craft, thus providing the basis for an ongoing programme of training and education.

In such ways Worcestershire is trying to balance both education and training. In the narrowest sense, training is the preparation for the duties brethren hold or will hold in the Lodge.

Education is the broadening of the mind, the stimulation to a deeper understanding of the foundations of the temple Masonry strives to build in all men's hearts.

Masonic Education has been touted as the main ingredient of lodge member retention and as Directors of Masonic Education we have been charged with making our meetings much more appealing, especially to the younger masons. The following article deals with this issue.

## STEMMING THE FLOW

(M.S.A. is indebted to M.W. Brother E. R. Minchew, PGM of Louisiana, and Director of Masonic Education for the Grand Lodge of Louisiana, for sharing his thoughts on "stemming the flow" of membership losses.)

Most Grand Jurisdictions, if not all, are concerned with the loss of members. Basically, there are three categories of membership losses that claim their attention: by demits, by non-payment of dues, and by candidates who fail to complete the degrees.

A well-planned program by the Lodge is necessary, a program that will involve as many members as possible. Specially planned programs will attract and encourage the presence of members. Homecoming, Father-and-Son Night, etc. Each Lodge meeting should include a discussion of some Masonic topic for information when no degree work is on the agenda. There are many sources for information topics on Masonry; probably the best is the Short Talk Bulletin. (Ask M.S.A. for the catalog listing the more than 680 titles.) Most Masons are interested in learning more about the history, heritage, philosophy, famous men in Masonry, and ideals of the Fraternity. Open meetings, where the doors are opened to non-Masons, are excellent opportunities for good fellowship and for improving the image of Masonry.

In other words, A MASONIC EDUCATION PROGRAM in each Lodge is a MUST. In such meetings, a special effort should be made to acquaint all members with what the Lodge is doing and how each member is a part of the program. The Lodge program should include opportunities for the members to discuss what each wants out of his Masonic life. It is surprising how many good ideas for improving the interest and attendance of the members can be provided by the members. Too frequently they are not encouraged to let their wishes be known.

Some Lodges send out questionnaires to all members asking for the members' desire to do a certain work in the Lodge. This method gives every member the opportunity to let his wishes be known. A follow-up use of members is the result. Other Lodges have seminars with members to get the members' reaction to what the Lodge should do. It all boils down to what has often been said, "A working Mason is an interested Mason."

Some Lodges use a Contact Committee to get in touch with Masons who do not regularly attend Lodge and inform them that they are missed and that they are needed. When such efforts are exerted, the members will feel a part of the Lodge, and many even become regular in attendance.

Members who are unable to attend Lodge meetings should be visited by the Contact Committee as often as possible, and by the principal officers. Telephone calls can be used by the Committee to prevent disabled Brethren from feeling a sense of neglect, and to assure the aged and infirm that they are still a part of the Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons. On special occasions, such as when honoring the members with long years of service to the Craft, the Committee should arrange transportation for the disabled.

The second category of membership losses is through suspension for non-payment of dues. Some Grand Jurisdictions report as many as five to eight hundred per year. Of the total number that are suspended, about fifty percent request reinstatement. Again, a sufficient loss to cause concern.

There are sundry reasons for failure of Masons to pay their annual dues. The primary causes might be loss of interest, living in another location, financial difficulties and a feeling of neglect.

Some Lodges have sought to solve this problem by making personal calls on the delinquent Brothers. When this is not possible, Masons in the vicinity of the domicile of the delinquent Mason are asked to make a personal contact. In some Lodges the Worshipful Master appoints a committee to visit a Brother who is suspended and persuade him to pay his dues. Other Lodges use different appeals. Financial aid is often provided for the Brother who is in financial straits.

Whatever is done when a Mason becomes delinquent is like locking the barn after the horse is stolen. Rather than treat the disease, perhaps more attention should be given to prevention.

Again, a well-planned program of Masonic Education that will touch the lives of all of the members is suggested. Several Grand Jurisdictions are making much improvement in Grand Lodge oriented and sponsored educational pro-grams that are directed toward improving attendance at Lodge meetings and having a better informed membership on Masonry. There remains much to be done. Perhaps too much money is being spent on administration and other acute needs of Masons and Masonry. There should be some kind of an annual pro-gram in every Lodge to reach as many members as possible.

The third category of membership losses, and the one in which the writer is personally interested, is in the loss of candidates who take the first degree and then drop out of Masonry. This problem has been discussed with Grand Lodge officers of several Grand Jurisdictions and there is a kindred anxiety and concern.

For instance, in Louisiana in 1976, 1187 candidates were initiated and only 874 were raised. In 1977 there were 1279 who were initiated while only 901 were raised. In 1978 the number initiated was 1139 with 886 being raised. In three years there was a total loss of 944 Master Masons. Most of these will probably not repetition for advanced degrees. There would have been a gain in membership in Louisiana if the losses due to not completing degrees could have been drastically reduced.

Why don't candidates complete the three degrees? The writer has made a study of this problem and presents one actual case.

In one of the Louisiana Lodges there were twelve petitions for degrees that were formally approved by the Lodge. Seven of the applicants completed the degrees within the required time. The other five went no farther than the first degree. The degrees, in each instance, were well conferred. Each candidate received the same information before and after each degree. The five who did not pursue advancement in Masonry beyond the first degree were interviewed and asked "why"? Here are the answers: Two said they did not have time to learn the catechism; one said that he petitioned only because his wife wanted him to become a Mason, and that Masonry demanded too much of him; another said that he could not abide by the moral teachings of Masonry as exemplified in the first degree, especially the obligation; the last one said he couldn't learn the work.

The results of the interviews were reported to the Master of the Lodge. He appointed a committee to visit each of the five candidates and to persuade him to continue his Masonic career. The committee was successful with only one— can you guess which one? Yes, it was the one who said he couldn't learn the catechism. He tried, did his best, was not perfect in his recitation but was passed and finally became a Master Mason. You will be glad to know that this Brother is now one of the most used Masons in his Lodge in everything except degree work.

The reasons given by the five Entered Apprentice Masons in the example that has been cited are probably the most often found excuses for not completing the degrees. They might give a hint as to what is needed to be In Louisiana the Grand Lodge is working on a statewide program to

educate the applicants for Masonry through the appointment of a committee in each Lodge to visit the petitioner after he has been accepted for the first degree. This is called the Lodge Program of Masonic Education. The appointed committee (this committee is not the investigating committee), visits the candidate and his wife (and older children if possible) to give to them the philosophy of Masonry that will inform him of the step he is about to take. After the discussion, the committee gives to the candidate a copy of SEARCH FOR MASONIC LIGHT entitled PREPARATION. (This is the first of four small books that have been prepared by the Committee on Education of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana and are available from the Service Committee of the Grand Lodge.) Preparation further enlightens the candidate on Masonry. After the first degree is conferred, the committee again visits the E.A. Mason, further enlightens him on the Philosophy of the E.A. Degree and answers any questions that may be asked. This process is continued through the second and third degrees. The program reduced the losses by seventy-five in 1978. (A similar program is contained in the new M.S.A. Digest, "Tried and Proven.")

Another suggestion for reducing the losses through failure to complete the degrees is that of "Sponsorship." When the applicant's petition is presented to the Lodge and favorably received, the Master appoints a well-informed Brother to act as the candidate's sponsor. The sponsor works with the candidate throughout his degree career. The duties of the sponsor supplement the work of the Education Committee and assures the candidate that he has a friend to guide him through the three degrees, to arrange for a lecturer and assist the candidate in any way necessary. (In some Jurisdictions, this is called "the Mentor System.")

In summary (1) Losses in Membership must be the concern of both the Grand Lodge officers and the Lodge officers; (2) The Lodge must include and involve as many Masons as possible in the annual program of the Lodge; (3) A definite program of Masonic Education on a personal basis is essential.

## **Assignment**

**List five topics of Masonic Education you consider important to your lodge?**

**Prepare a 30 minute presentation on one of those topics for presentation to your lodge.**