



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

September 15, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

In my message when I was running for Grand Warden and, again when I was a candidate for Deputy Grand Master, I emphasized two things: (1) A renewed focus on retaining and increasing our membership, and (2) A desire to reduce and eliminate the conflicts, bad-blood and infighting I see in some Lodges and in the Order.

I have spent considerable time in these DMC Newsletters talking about the first item. And today, I'd like to spend a few moments talking about the second item. Frankly, they are intertwined and interlinked. If a Lodge is disrupted by fights between members or factions of members, it becomes an uncomfortable place - certainly not a place conducive for new members. In this regard, I note the speech given by Bob Smith, the out-going Sovereign Grand Master, during last month's Sovereign Grand Lodge sessions. Brother Smith talked about this very topic. Here is what he said:

"I was Sovereign Grand Master for less than 30 minutes when I had to deal with two brothers fighting. Two days before I came here, I had to deal with two brothers fighting. Not the same two but Odd Fellows all. And it breaks my heart to see the tension that we face because of the inner fighting in our lodges, in our Grand Lodges and between lodges and it is tearing us apart. It was wonderful to sit here tonight and listen to the marvelous things we've done this year. We have given over 750 million dollars to help people. Isn't it strange that we can help people we don't see and we don't know but we have trouble getting along with the person sitting next to us...with the amount of wonderful things we can do fighting each other. Just imagine what we can do if we work together..."

Simply put, our Lodges are too small and our Order has too few members to allow such personal, and often petty, disruptions. When we engage in such fighting, have we forgotten the instructions we learned in the Degree of Friendship, the Degree of Love, and the Degree of Truth?

So, what are we to do when we see such infighting and conflict within our Lodge? First, it is the antagonists who must make an effort to resolve the discord. Hopefully, these antagonists - Brothers and Sisters in the same fraternal order - can step back, apologize, and find a better path forward. But if that doesn't work, it is up to us to find that senior, respected member of the Lodge who can intercede and help the antagonists find the way to resolution.



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And these conflicts must find a resolution. The alternative is a festering sore and disruption in the Lodge. That disruption creates an environment which is not conducive to retaining members, and certainly not friendly to potential new members. Who wants to join a Lodge full of tension and bad-blood? Where's the fun in that? And why join a Lodge where the members violate the very tenets for which the Lodge stands?

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master