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DDGM Talks

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THE MASONIC GIMMICK MANUFACTURING COMPANY UNLIMITED

Have you heard it? It's out there! The weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! The Masonic Gimmick Manufacturing Company Unlimited is working overtime devising stunts to "modernize" the Craft Lodge of Freemasonry, to put it in line with ten thousand other organizations that clamour for the attention of its membership (both potential and actual). Among its many advertised gimmicks, we are urged to try are these:

Abandon the "free will and accord" rule which has placed our Craft far above the mine run of societies and permit outright solicitation.

Ape the service clubs. Get busy on "projects" galore in the best Babbitt fashion.

Go into the organized do good business in a big way. Find an area of the human body that has not been exploited. Exploit it. Set a quota, have a kick off dinner and begin ringing doorbells.

Subsidize other organizations right and left, and, in doing, ignore, neglect and starve the parent body.

Hire press agents to tell the world what great boys we are.

Imitate Hollywood. Stage an extravaganza. Bring in all the groups that ever fancied themselves remotely related to Freemasonry. Form the parade, blow the bugle, beat the drums and cheapen the Fraternity.

Let Freemasonry take a position on the public issues of the day. Stand up and be counted (assuming, of course, that the passion of our Craft takes is in line with our own pet prejudices).

Go all out for materialism. Raise money, spend it. Build temples and institutions. Subsidize, endow. Whatever can be had by writing a cheque, get it!

Centralize, centralize, centralize. Pattern Freemasonry after government bureaucracy. Let nothing be done by an individual or a Lodge; do everything on a provincial or national level the super-duper way. Make a great "to-do" about local self government but accept no local self responsibility.

That's quite a catalogue of potential modernization gimmicks!

In the restless superficial age in which we live, we are impatient unless our organized bodies have slogans, carry banners and make official pronouncements on about every subject under the sun, however trivial. We want them to follow the conventional pattern; to maintain lobbies, conduct drives and campaigns, to strive to get into the headlines and on the airwaves, to write cheques to everything that sounds

benevolent and has a board of directors and in general, to have a finger in every pie.

Freemasonry, in its truest sense, does none of these.

Strange, is it not, that our ancient Craft should have gained for itself such a pre-eminent position of honour and prestige when it does almost nothing in the conventional manner.

Not a word about mass action, nor pressure groups, nor resolutions on matters of government policy. No “pro” this or “anti” that. No sales talk for any pet scheme. No great undertaking to cure the ills of the world by making everyone over to fit a pattern of our own design. No running about like chickens with their heads off in search of a do-good project with which to gain favourable notice. No restless biting of the nails to compete with a service club or a civic league. No endless “busyness” which loses sight of the objective.

No brethren, the Craft is not in danger of lapsing from power through a decline in numbers; neither need it fear external enemies. Its principal danger, on the other hand, is that its own members may lose sight of its true nature and its ancient ideals.

The objective of Masonry is the same today as it was in its earliest day—that is, to take an individual (just one man at a time, mind you, and as good a man as possible) and try to make a better man of him—that is all! If we focus on that simple fact, that singular purpose, then we have no need to request a

catalogue of modernizing gimmicks. Everything we need is in the hearts of our brethren—we just have to see that it gets its appropriate attention.

The man who is made better through his “involvement” in Masonry is the only visible evidence of the real worth of Masonry. If we who are in the fraternity are not seen to become better people, why would anyone wish to join? Brethren, Masonry is not on trial here, but Masons continually are. If, or when, we as individuals, are seen to become better individuals, there’ll be no grass on the pathway to our door, but it is only from within that betterment can occur.

Brethren, I close with a short poem which is far more in keeping with Masonry than any of the gimmicks alluded to earlier:

Can we say goodnight in parting with the day that’s slipping
fast?
That we helped a single person of the many that we passed?
Is a single heart rejoicing over what we did or said?
Can the man whose hopes were fading now with courage look
ahead?

Did we waste the day or lose it? Was it well or sorely spent?
Did we leave a trail of kindness or a scar of discontent?
As we close our eyes in slumber do you think that God will say
“You deserve one more tomorrow by the work you did today”.