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DDGM Talks

Talk Number 2

Topic: Does Size Really Matter?

Presented at: Coronation Lodge No. 502

Date: October 1, 2018

## DOES SIZE REALLY MATTER?

Throughout the 60's, 70's and into the 80's, joining Masonry and entering the Lodge room was much like navigating the roundabouts we have on some of our roadways today. You came in and if you were quick to grasp the ritual and floor work of the degrees, you were immediately considered by the Past Master's as being a likely member to begin advancing through the officer lineup. If not, you went around and around, looking for a purpose within your Lodge or possibly joining a concordant body of Masonry. Or you lost interest in searching by yourself, stopped attending the meetings and eventually requested a demit or were suspended for non-payment of dues. For the Lodges, not to worry. There was always a steady stream of prospective new members wishing to join and enter the roundabout.

In today's world, where everyone has (and broadcasts) lofty ambitions, goals and glossy four colour pamphlets, I find there is a great deal of talk and not a lot of action. Actions speak louder than words. By constantly acting in the manner to which Freemasonry has historically been associated, our actions will speak louder than any four-colour pamphlet we can produce.

A man has to be ready in his heart and mind to fully appreciate, understand and integrate with the tenets of Freemasonry. I feel this cannot be done in an overt manner and "forcing" someone to become aware of the Craft or to join it. I wear the bling and speak openly about it when someone asks. But I do it in a subtle manner, much like the personality of the Craft.

So, we go through our daily lives as Masons in a manner that does not hit men over the head with it. What does that provide us? It provides us a group of men who come to the fraternity because they want to. If I see someone I respect doing something, then I am much

more likely to ask questions about it and if I join their group, I am more likely to be strong on the uptake and stay around after the initial excitement has worn off. This commitment is what we need to sustain our membership.

But I have never fully understood this apparently insatiable need to swell our ranks. I see it as the quality vs. quantity debate. When I am in Lodge, I would much rather have small groups of men doing their great ritual work and outside the Lodge, having a group of men that support me in all aspects. Freemasonry is still a tremendous organization even if there's 30 or 30,000 members in our jurisdiction. Yes, I understand there needs to be a certain number to attain critical mass otherwise not much can happen. But I ask, ***“does size really matter”?***

Twenty-five years ago (1993), the Niagara “A” Masonic District was composed of fourteen Craft Lodges, boasting membership of 1989 brethren. Today, there are fifteen Lodges in the district with a total combined membership of only 1070, give or take. Almost half. What I found even more interesting was in 1993 there were two Lodges with less than one hundred members (Dufferin 338 and Adanac 614). Today, it is the exact opposite, with only two Lodges boasting over one hundred members (Niagara 2 and St. Andrews 661). So, I beg to ask of you, ***“does size really matter”?***

Look at some of the other fraternal groups that are somewhat similar, what are their numbers like? Probably not as good as Freemasonry's. Big is not always better.

Think back to the NE angle lecture. “...from the foundation laid this evening may you raise a superstructure, perfect in its parts and honourable to its builder”. Also, about the rough and smooth ashlar. The rough ashlar was selected from the quarry because it was seen as having good qualities and is thus formed into a perfect ashlar by

removing its rough edges. A poor stone would not have been selected. We are all rough ashlar who saw in ourselves and by others that there were good qualities worthy of refinement towards a perfect ashlar. Is our goal to find every decent piece of rock in the world and turn it into a perfect ashlar? Or is it to take the ones that we find in the quarry of our daily lives and work on perfecting them? Even with this very selective process, there have been a great number of buildings created by Masons over the centuries. If every rock that had potential was made perfect, I suspect we'd have a few more magnificent buildings, but would have a lot more piles of perfect ashlar without a use.

And finally, brethren, in his address at the Annual Communication of our Grand Lodge in 1964, MW Bro. John Alfred Irvine had this to say about the size of Lodges:

**“In those areas of the world where they insist on small Lodges, say for instance a maximum of 100 members, Masonry flourishes. Any man who becomes a member of a Lodge should, if he desires and has the ability, have an opportunity to fill an office. It is only a natural thing for a brother to aspire to become Master of his Lodge. But when you have for instance, a Lodge of some 300 members, he reasons it out as a new member and knows that his chances are only one in 300 that he might be elected Worshipful Master. Consequently, he gets lost in the stream of membership, eventually stays away from Lodge and, in many cases, the man ends up suspended or demitted.”**

Anyone who was actively involved in Craft Masonry in the 60's, 70's and 80's can attest and relate to that statement made by MW Bro. Irvine. And I am one of them who can.

In closing, I thank the members of Coronation Lodge in attendance this evening. The hospitality you have shown towards myself, the members of the Official Party and all visitors has been duly noted. Allow

that camaraderie to carry on as we soon commence adjournment of this meeting and retire to the banquet room for a time of refreshment and social intercourse.

Thank you, Worshipful Master and thank you Brethren for sharing your time and attention with us. Take care.