

**The Albury MS.
THE STATIC LODGE
(What should be done to revitalize it?)**

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The paper assigned to me "The Static Lodge" may be dealt with in two parts:

Part I. The Static Lodge.

Part II. What should be done to revitalize it?

I. The Static Lodge.

In considering the Static Lodge it is difficult to develop an idea without overlapping thoughts expressed by others on similar topics, even at this Conference. Personally, all the things a man can say have been said before at one time or another. We hear of "Research Lodges" and "Lodges of Instruction", all conveying the same idea of awareness and activity, but a "Static Lodge" conveys the very opposite. The word "static" is simply a new name for an old condition. The dictionary defines "static" as pertaining to bodies at rest or motionless, passive forces, opposite to dynamic. Such a definition gives us hope, for a body at rest can be revived and brought to life. It has within itself the power to act.

In his Note Book, Elbert Hobard says - "We become robust only through exercise; and every faculty of the mind and every attribute of the soul grows strong only as it is exercised."

There is no situation that is hopeless. It is the attitude of men that is hopeless. Many assume the position that if all the problems were removed we would have a wonderful time. But we know that if we had no problems this would be a hopeless world.

As Masons we cannot remain "static"; we must grow and advance; we must spend and be spent, or deteriorate. Freemasonry we say: "Is a beautiful system of morality, it is veiled in allegory." It is that and more; it is a way of life, a philosophy. It is the science and art of light living. We do not need to change that as far as our outlook is concerned. If I know how to live and live what I know then I have

fulfilled the whole system of Freemasonry. We have got to take off our coats and know what it is all about. We have to understand the philosophy and then go out and practice it. Herein lies the solution to the "static" lodge and the world as a whole.

In examining the "static" lodge we are confined more or less to the "tiled recesses of the Lodge". An ancient charge describes the lodge as "A place where Freemasons assemble -to work and instruct and improve themselves in the mysteries of their ancient Science". Now that we have a definition of a Lodge and of the word "static" we are ready to proceed.

What makes a lodge "static"?

The causes of a "static" Lodge can be set out in the following:

1. Lack of interest among -the members of a. Lodge.
2. Officers carry out their duties in a careless manner.
3. Just enough men to fill the chairs and constitute a Lodge.
4. Lack of enthusiasm because of private piques or quarrels within the Lodge.
5. The absence of an atmosphere of fellowship.
6. Lack of interest in their masonry.
7. No definite work planned.
8. The aim of many is to obtain the Higher Degrees and thus forget Masonry,
9. Failure to remember and put into practice their Obligations.

In these modern days there are many factors to consider relative to a "static" Lodge. The first half of the 20th Century was notable for its interest in service to humanity It has been and is the ago of service clubs. The idea of up and doing has been the motivating force. Doing those things that the public can see have been disturbing factors in the life of Freemasonry. Many members propose similar programs for the Craft. "we are inactive" they say, "let us do something spectacular". Many Brethren have come into membership with absolutely the wrong impression of Freemasonry. They see it in the light of a service club. It is therefore our duty and responsibility to change their idea that they have to show something tangible to the outside world. It is a perilous procedure to introduce any matters that may sow the seeds of discord or "prostitute the sacred time of the Lodge to ignoble purposes or alien interests".

Perhaps the real cause of a "static" Lodge is the lack of a keen ambition on the part of the Worshipful Master and his officers to have an interesting and successful Lodge. This is brought about because they do not make themselves sufficiently conversant with the Ritual and also with the duties that pertain to their respective offices. The result is a weak, perfunctory, and unsatisfying year of office, that is no credit to the occupant and definitely harmful both to the Lodge and to Freemasonry. Yes, in a "static" Lodge one will find "monotonously delivered formalities, poorly administered proceedings, and ceremonies that are improperly prepared and unimpressive".

A Lodge often becomes "static" because it is situated in an isolated area. I have one in mind that is 20 miles from its nearest sister Lodge. Its membership is small in number and in influence; other organizations predominate in that locality. How to revitalize it has taxed the ingenuity of many D.D.G. Masters.

Part II. What should be done to revitalize it?

We must get rid of indifference within the membership of the Lodge, for it lies at the base of many of our difficulties. It has a lot to answer for in regard to our Lodges not functioning properly. Human nature seeks the easy way out, thus shirks its many responsibilities. Because we are masons and because we are organized into Lodges and Grand Lodges, the idea is prevalent that that is all that is necessary. I am inclined to believe that we must, if I may use the term, "evangelize our Masonry". We have got to make it Vivid and vital, and it must be a Masonry that lives in the present and looks to the future, rather than wrapping around itself a cloak of historic greatness. I believe that we have to get more Masonry into men, than more men into Masonry.

Men no longer need to go to Lodge for diversion. There are many detracting forces which seek to satisfy their need for entertainment and refreshment. "Modern associations" such as political, and economic groups, social and service clubs, many of which have well planned interesting activities, are applicable to present day interests. Those who go to Lodge must do so for a more substantial reason. It must be more because of loyalty to the Lodge, love of Masonic principles and teachings, or because of a deeper faith in the Fundamentals of the Fraternity. These are new conditions and it can be readily seen that to revitalize a "static" Lodge attendance assumes a greater importance.

On our Lodge notice is the Ancient charge "From Ancient times no Master or Fellow could be absent from the Lodge, especially when warned to appear at it, without incurring a severe censure, unless it appeared to the Master and Wardens that purely necessity hindered him".

In a Lodge a man comes forward of his own "free will and accord". He is free; this is a landmark of our Order. But his Obligations however, tie him down for all time to come. Constant repetition of these obligations within the Lodge room and within his heart should revitalize him, and the Lodge of which he is a member.

A "static" Lodge can be revitalized by occasionally putting new designs on the Trestle Board. In order to maintain interest in a Lodge we must see to it that the members are active; that each member has a sense of responsibility to the Craft; that he must make a contribution to the welfare of humanity.

We will be a long way on the road bringing back the interest lacking in a Lodge when Ritualistic work is performed smoothly, and correctly interpreted by men trained for it, and that training acquired among our Brethren.

The designs on the Trestle Board include the standard Masonic functions and "allied activities".

1. Masonic addresses by local and visiting Brethren and Grand Lodge Officers.
2. Specially prepared Degree Ceremonies.
3. Discussions and debates on Masonic subjects.
4. Innovations that are Masonic in spirit.
5. A well devised plan for the functioning of all phases of Lodge Masonry.

The carrying out of these designs in our respective Lodges will result in marvellous progress in our time honored Institution. It will be a means of inspiration to any constituent Lodges which may chance to be functioning below par in a respective Grand Jurisdiction.

In our effort to revitalize the "static" Lodge let us not lay violent hands on usage and custom, and bend the institution to meet every condition in society. We make no attempt to parade before the world, either our philosophy or our good deeds. We are not seeking the applause of the multitude, but our work should be none-the-less effective by reason of

the fact that it is carried on quietly and without show. If we practice the virtues we extol in our philosophy; if we instill in the mind and heart of our new members those lessons of peace, goodwill and tolerance, of reliance on God and confidence in man, our work is truly not in vain.

The Masonic Design is the development of character and the improvement of life and conduct. It deals in principles rather than in projects, in the disseminations of ideals rather than programs and self-advertisements. Open it to projects and you have disunity. Freemasonry teaches the principles and ideals of the good life and thus the Mason goes out to apply his knowledge in practice and service.

A "static" Lodge can be revitalized by making a Lodge room a school or college, training Masons how to live, and sending them out into the world to practice the: great tenets. The true Mason carries his skill and the honor of the Craft into the world of thought and ideas, of life and conduct.

Masonry is a most personal thing. Therefore the revitalizing of a "static" Lodge depends upon the personal attitude of a Mason and his appreciation of the great body of truth set forth so vividly by signs and symbols, and his personal appropriation of those truths.

The power and influence of Freemasonry is just what Freemasons choose to make it. It can be a great force in the world for good, uplifting and elevating, bringing comfort, light and happiness to all. Or it can become merely a body practicing secret signs and symbols, with a ritual beautiful in itself, but meaningless; unless it leads to the practice of what it preaches.

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