

Who Leads The Leader?

By Alden H. Jones

In 1973, at the 26th Annual Tri-State Conference held in Portland, Oregon, the Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Washington Presented a paper entitled "How to Promote Effective Leadership in Our Constituent Lodges." This Short Talk Bulletin has been adapted from that paper. The author, Most Worshipful Brother Alden H. Jones, served as Grand Master of Masons in Washington in 1975-76.

What is effective leadership? Who provides Lodge leadership? What can the lodge leader be expected reasonably to do? What happens if he doesn't do these things? Why isn't lodge leadership automatic? How do you promote something that doesn't exist? Who leads the leader? We have leadership problems in some, if not many, of our lodges. Another way to describe the situation is to say that we have many problems in our lodges and some of them are the result of ineffective leadership. An evaluation report from one of our District Deputies stated recently that the affairs of a certain lodge had not been well handled during the year because "The Worshipful Master is not gifted with the qualities of leadership."

What exactly was our Deputy telling us? First, that the constructive activities of the lodge had not been implemented; second, that this is a one-man lodge--the members look solely to the Master for lodge Leadership; third, that the one man was not aware of what he is expected to do or of how to do it, and, fourth. that the members were resigned to letting the affairs of the lodge drift along for another year. Let's examine these points. What are the constructive activities of the lodge which require implementation? Prompt opening and closing of meetings, proficient opening and closing ceremonies, courteous reception of visitors, considerate attention to candidates, orderly and harmonious disposal of lodge business, informative special programs, community projects and public ceremonies, Masonic encouragement and inspiration for the Brethren. These are examples of constructive activities of a lodge. They are the things that we expect to find when we go to a lodge meeting, for we know that lodges die if they don't engage in purposeful activities.

Now, what about leadership of the symbolic lodge? To whom do we look for leadership? Why, to the Master, of course. Then what if he isn't a leader? We cannot demand it of him. He is chosen democratically by a majority vote and any member is eligible to be chosen Master of his lodge. This is for a good Masonic reason and it has nothing to do with his gift of leadership.

More often than not, the primary qualifying factor for a Master is his willingness to take the office, rather than his gift of leadership.

Our selection of officers sets in motion a situation which, by its own horsepower, isn't likely to provide the effective leadership we desperately need. The Master was originally appointed to the line because of his regular and early attendance at our meetings, plus, perhaps, his ability to make good ham sandwiches or his good companionship as a fishing partner. The new Steward was instructed to assist the Deacons and other officers and he was encouraged to expect advancement through the line. In due course he was elected Master of his lodge and at his installation he pledged his allegiance to Grand Lodge, promised to observe the ByLaws of his lodge and to carefully perform "all the duties appertaining to his office." Then he was given fifteen paragraphs of charges and regulations and not once were the words "leader" or "leadership" spoken. We extracted from him a promise to attend Grand Lodge but when we required his pledge to "pay attention to all the duties of Masonry" we immediately gave him an out by adding "on convenient occasions. " As a crowning gesture we told him, apparently with tongue in cheek, that he is now to be installed "Master of Temple Lodge in full confidence of your skill and capacity to govern the same." Then we spent the next twelve months grumbling because he didn't have the gift of leadership.

We have dwelt on this superficial and exaggerated appraisal in a negative, and therefore a non-Masonic manner in order to emphasize this point. The installation of a Worshipful Master does not automatically assure leadership in a lodge. Leadership is not a Masonic virtue. We should separate our expectation of Masonic attributes and when leadership qualities are missing, we should be willing to become involved and offer our leadership knowledge to help fill the gap.

Let us turn to our third element and consider the details of the leadership pattern which must prevail if constructive activities are to be implemented in the lodge.

1. **THE LEADER ORGANIZES.** He plans ahead, assigns committees, delegates work, holds officer meetings, gets people involved.
2. **b.** He comes early to the Temple, starts meetings on time, and anticipates problems, acts decisively, avoids late meetings.
3. **THE LEADER ARRANGES INTERESTING MEETINGS.** He provides instruction, motivation and inspiration, invites guest speakers, recalls great moments in Masonry, holds special nights to generate interest.
4. **THE LEADER PRESERVES THE LANDMARKS.** He schedules a review and discussion of these to point out their great importance, calls attention when one is involved in lodge work.

5. **THE LEADER ENHANCES MASONRY'S IMAGE.** He keeps the Temple bright and clean, encourages public ceremonies such as installations, Ladies Nights, School Awards, Church attendance clothed as Masons.
6. **THE LEADER FOLLOWS THE STANDARD WORK.** He studies the Ritual regularly and asks other officers to do the same, encourages corrections, observes work in other lodges.
7. **THE LEADER PRACTICES BROTHERHOOD.** He is considerate, gives credit, shows appreciation, holds honor nights, is responsible and on call when needed.
8. **THE LEADER IS REALISTIC.** He faces duties with honesty, withholds praise if it is not due, pulls no punches when hard decisions have to be made.
9. **THE LEADER ADOPTS A MAJOR PROJECT.** He involves the lodge in something to sustain its interest for several months, or all year, such as a Sojourners Program, a Community Project, a Youth Program, a Bulletin, a Masonic Library.
10. **THE LEADER SPONSORS MASONRY'S HIGH PURPOSE.** He makes meetings a source of inspiration for the spirit, encourages thinking on a high plane, focuses attention on man's potential for excellence and greatness.

Ah, yes, if the Master is gifted with the qualities of leadership, he performs these and similar acts and thus creates opportunity and impetus for an ongoing lodge program. But if he isn't gifted, how do we help him? How do we give him leadership? The key word is HOW.

HOW do we promote leadership when it is missing?

We contend that we are all a part of this drama and that we have a duty to make it work. Some of us may have a personal involvement; each of us has watched the developing picture in our lodge and has a deep concern for the outcome. We should look in the mirror and say, "You own a piece of this action. Don't give me your old wornout excuse that nobody interferes with the Worshipful Master. What about Brotherhood? What about Service? What about Unity? What about the Instructive Tongue? What about reminding a Brother in a most friendly manner?"

Obviously, not all who see the need are qualified to lead the leader, but there are those in any group who know at least part of the answer and who can be trusted to provide personal counseling with propriety. This should be encouraged. Practical advice or a discreet suggestion from a respected Brother can often convey a crucial message. Past Masters who have the precious gift of seeing a lodge problem for its relevance with 1983 and not as a carry-over from 1957 belong in this elite group of private counselors. District Deputies are uniquely qualified for leadership guidance. Not only were they appointed because of their leadership qualities, but they are charged to assist the lodges to the best of their ability and they are supported by the authority of the Grand Master. This authority is not used nearly often enough to pry open stubborn doors.

One step beyond private counseling is the action which can be taken within the lodge by individual officers or Brethren as a means of encouraging decisiveness thus, leadership, on the part of the Master. Proposals can be made for lodge projects of programs, and discussions can be introduced to bring information into the open and obtain an indication of interest by the lodge members and set the stage for the Master's decision. Motions for lodge commitment can be useful in forcing a leadership decision. Such strategy would be utilized for the primary purpose of promoting lodge activity but it should be done invariably in a manner to accommodate the lodge Master and as a step in developing his leadership potential. If he is fully informed of the proposed business before the meeting, then so much the better.

A third type of correction for ineffectual leadership is in group study of leadership principles. Lodge officer associations should Sponsor such studies through discussion, lecture or seminar programs. Grand Lodge Officers and Committees should be involved in the leadership improvement effort by the offer of instructional programs in lodges or officer associations. As a last resort, we may look eventually to Grand Lodge for a formal program of leadership training for officers of constituent lodges. In fact, the time for that may be later than we think.

In summary, although we look to the Worshipful Master for leadership, we often find him with limited ability and we cannot demand more from him; that lodge leadership is a management function and should not be confused with the philosophical duties of the Master; that when leadership qualities are absent, the welfare of the lodge is in danger; that the technique of leadership and the pattern of lodge management can be defined and transmitted as a counseling or training process; that when the need for guidance is evident, those qualified to provide it should do so as a Masonic duty; and, finally, that any action taken should be expressly for the assistance of the Worshipful Master and at his will and pleasure even when we use a 2 x 4 to get his attention, tenderly, of course.

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