



LODGE VEGAS # 32

Kakistocracy

By Bro. Brother Dale Sabin

definition: government by the least qualified, from the Greek kakistos; worst, superlative of kakos; bad. (American Heritage Dictionary, 4th edition.)

Post- WW II Freemasonry has seen a de-evolution of the Fraternity from a grand Philosophical Order, to a pseudo- mystical public charity, under the management of men who not only misunderstand the philosophical and esoteric aspects of the Craft, but attempt to correct their irrelevance by increasing membership of like- minded individuals, and boosting public support by concentrating their efforts into charitable fundraising, which it does poorly.

To the young Candidate, we promise Philosophy; what we actually deliver is politics, bad food, incredibly boring business meetings, and badly done Ritual. The new Mason, disappointed by this subterfuge, either fades into the background, quietly and individually studying and practicing Masonry as it was meant to be, or simply becomes inactive, if he doesn't actually demit. The latter will never be seen again, the former makes himself a Master through his individual effort and study, but will never ask, or be asked, to serve in a managerial capacity.

Why? Like calls to like; incompetence breeds incompetence. In business we refer to this, usually with a chuckle, as "The Peter Principle:" an individual rises to his own level of incompetence. In Masonry, we refer to this, in all seriousness, as "advancement." The only Mason who will be tapped to serve in a Grand Lodge capacity, or would even desire to do so, under these circumstances, is the Mason who probably shouldn't have passed through our West Gate in the first place.

Of this type of Mason, Manly P. Hall says: "They can never do any harm to Freemasonry by joining, because they cannot get in ... Watch fobs, lapel badges, and other insignia do not make Masons; neither does the ritual ordain them. Masons are evolved through the self- conscious effort to live up to the highest ideals within themselves ..."

Brother Hall, usually a fairly accurate and insightful commentator on Masonry, is dead wrong in this, at least as it applies to the physical body of Freemasonry in the last half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. They have done nothing but harm.

There is yet a second problem contributing to our current poor leadership: lack of Masonic education. This can take a potentially good Mason, and make him worse, through no fault of his own. A Brother once said "today's inept DDGM is tomorrows incompetent Grand Master."

I would add: today's uneducated Master Mason is tomorrows inept DDGM. Fortunately, the cure for this incompetence at the top is largely the same cure as for the rest of the problems in our Fraternity.

1. **Guarding the West Gate.**

We, as Masons, are all the primary Tilers of our Lodge. Forget about membership drives and recruiting techniques. Take the blank petitions out of your pocket, briefcase, and glove compartment. When a potential Candidate inquires after membership, YOU must conduct an investigation, make clear what we are and what we are not, and guarantee that an unsuitable Candidate never sets foot beyond our Pillars.

2. **Education.**

Study, closely, our Fellow craft Degree. We are more than an Order; we are a School. Sadly, we are a school without a curriculum. We must get back to that basic function, by having ongoing Masonic Education at every meeting, and not just the usual "Famous Masons" rubbish. We need varied programs in the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, Esoterica, Philosophy, and Masonic Jurisprudence.

Without it, we're just a dysfunctional dinner club.

More fundamentally, we need to spend more time and effort educating our Entered Apprentices and Fellow crafts, beyond rote memorization. Some GL's have put together educational programs for their young Brethren; one I am aware of requires the answering of essay questions based on the lessons of every Degree, for proficiency. We can take a lesson from the "Irregular" Jurisdictions, particularly those working the Ancient and Accepted Rite, who require written essays from their Brethren, before being advanced. They refer to these essays, with pride, as their "Work;" we use the same term to refer to our poorly done Ritual.

3. **Quick advancement through the Chairs.**

Often, and for a variety of reasons, a young MM is pressured to fill a Warden's Chair, far before he is ready. This happens most frequently due to a lack of qualified or interested Brethren who regularly attend. While the "fix" for this is complex (more interesting meetings, better food, better education), the fact is, forcing a young MM into a Warden's Chair, to become WM in a year or two, does a disservice to the Lodge, and especially does a disservice to the Brother being forced into this position. He is, through no fault of his own, tomorrow's incompetent Grand Master.

4. **The non- linear Line.**

Simply, the WM sitting in the East should be the best Mason for the job. An incompetent SW is not only unqualified to be SW, he is certainly not qualified to be WM next time around. For that matter, last years bungling JD will be this years bungling SD, and a JS who can't function will most likely have the same problem next year as SS. In theory, we require proficiency from Candidates; we should do the same when choosing Officers.

Masonic kakistocracy is only one problem among many our Fraternity faces; fortunately, it shares the same cure: better quality, better-educated Masons. Not unlike physical abuse and alcoholism in a family, it is an ongoing cycle that must be stopped.

- Source: Knights of the North Masonic Dictionary