

A CALL TO A MINORITY

An Oration

by

W. Brother Eugene A. White

Grand Orator of the MW Grand Lodge, F. & A. M. of Washington

Past Master, William P. Doughery Lodge, No. 224

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This year the Grand Lodge of Oregon is celebrating the Centennial Anniversary of the coming to that jurisdiction of the first charter for a Masonic Lodge on the Pacific Coast of North America. In 1848 the State of Washington was a part of Oregon Territory and because Pierre B. Cornwall, a pioneer of Bellingham, played such an important part in the establishment of that first Lodge, our present Grand Lodge session is paying special tribute to him at this Ninety-first Annual Communication. Under such circumstances it is interesting to view the events of the last one hundred years and note the changes and progress of the Masonic institution.

During the last half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century the yeast of man's desire for freedom and a voice in his own government brought forth the bread of representative government in more or less palatable form.

In 1847 the Swiss threw off the strangling influence of the Jesuits and monasteries were suppressed.

In France in February, 1848, the forced abdication of Louis Phillipe made possible a provisional government based on republican principles.

The French revolution imparted a strong impulse to the people of Italy and constitutional rights were conceded to popular demand in several provinces which later threw off foreign influences and combined nationally.

In Germany in 1848, insurrectionary movements forced King Frederick Wilhelm IV of Prussia to keep his promise and convene a parliament made up of representatives of the people.

Austria-Hungary was so weakened internally by revolutions in 1848 that only the armed support of Russia prevented the whole monarchical fabric from falling apart. As a result some of the greatest statesmen and soldiers of Hungary perished on the scaffold.

The cycle by which people, striving for their rights, alternate between liberty and oppression, had reached a little more advanced phase in England. The Reform Bill of 1832 practically transferred political power from the aristocracy to the middle classes.

In an effort to further ameliorate the social and industrial conditions of the working class and increase their power and place in the government the Chartists organized in 1838, one year after Queen Victoria was crowned, and put forth their Peoples Charter. This among other things called for universal suffrage, removal of property qualifications as a right to vote, annual convening of Parliament, and the payment of salaries to members, thus making it possible for representatives to serve even though they did not have independent means. By 1848 this chartist movement had spent its force and control of the English government has rested with the middle classes pretty well down to the present time.

As is to be expected, the principles of democracy had received recognition to a greater extent in the United States and seemed to be riding the crest of the wave of success if we can judge from President Polk's third annual message to Congress from which the following is taken:

"There has been no period since the government was founded when all the industrial pursuits of our people have been more successful or when labor in all branches of business has received a fairer or a better reward.

"From our abundance we have been enabled to perform the less pleasing duty of furnishing food for the starving millions of favored countries."

This might have been written to describe conditions as they exist today.

The Northwest Boundary of Oregon Territory had just been successfully negotiated with Great Britain without recourse to arms.

Peace had just been declared closing the war with Mexico and the young United States Republic had demonstrated its ability to raise, equip and maintain an army adequate for its protection.

Since the revival of Masonry in England and its organization as a Speculative Art in 1717 it had by 1848 spread throughout her colonies and there were also Lodges on the continent; in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Germany, which was the cradle of the guilds of operative Stone Masons, had enjoyed organized Speculative Masonry since 1730 and in Austria, Maria Theresa became its active sponsor beginning in 1742.

The Grand Master of England appointed a Provincial Grand Master of Russia in 1731 but Masonry's progress was slow until 1763 when Catherine II declared herself Protectress of the Order. Her sponsorship was withdrawn in 1794 because of the political activity of Masons in France, but was revived again in 1804 and continued to 1822 at which time all secret societies were suppressed in Russia for a period of eighty-five years. It is interesting to note here that when Kerensky attempted, in

1917, to set up a republican form of government to replace the despotic rule of the Tsar, all the members of his cabinet were Masons.

One hundred years ago civilization had all the appearance of being on the march toward a more complete realization of the rights of man, Freedom and Liberty were everywhere in the ascendancy.

Masonry cannot and does not claim all the credit for this general advance in the recognition of human rights and as an institution it has never taken the lead in revolutionary activities. It has, however, always espoused the cause of individual liberty and freedom and as a result Masons have always been among the leaders in every movement to better the conditions for all the people. Its influence is described by Joseph Fort Newton in *The Builders*.

"Wherever Masonry flourishes and is allowed to build freely after its divine design, liberty, justice, education and true religion flourish and where it is hindered they suffer."

But as so often happens, there were some who were not satisfied with a regular orderly advance and the revolutionary thinking spawned some sports, i. e. abrupt deviations from type.

One hundred years ago, February, 1848, Karl Marx first published his *Communist Manifesto* urging the workers to seize the State by revolution and use the power of the State to control the machine and establish the world's first classless society and thus bring about an era of unlimited prosperity. Before this so designated machine, poverty was suffered as inevitable but prompted by Marx, and his promise of prosperity, poverty was thereafter to be regarded as the result of a conspiracy.

This manifesto was the first proclamation of revolutionary socialism armed with the learning of the nineteenth century, but expressed with the fire and energy of the agitator. It contained only a hazy outline for the social and political organization and did not receive much attention at first. Thirty years later in 1878, Bismarck pointed out its fallacies and vagaries as follows:

"If we could only find out what the (Marxist) future is like! We can only catch glimpses of it through the cracks. If every man has to have his share allotted to him from above, we arrive at a kind of prison existence when everyone is at the mercy of his warders.

"In our modern prisons the warder is at any rate a recognized official against whom you can lodge a complaint. But who will be the warders in the general socialist prison? There will be no question of lodging complaints against them. They will be the most merciless tyrants ever seen and the rest will be slaves to these tyrants."

The theory of Marxism is based on (1) pity, (2) hate, (3) desire for personal power and his followers set out to destroy the church and stamp out religion which he

characterized as an "opiate for the people." The followers of Marx are militant, persistent and unscrupulous and we know their tactics foster and lead to dictators. The first move of dictators is to suppress Masonry, for they cannot exist together.

Civilization suffered at the hands of Mussolini, Hitler, Franco and we are all well aware of Stalin's push of the Iron Curtain ever to the westward. As of today there is no Masonry in Russia or its satellite countries in Middle Europe-none in Spain or Portugal and none indigenous in Germany or Hungary. It but feebly exists in France and Italy and its future there is uncertain.

These events of the last one hundred years are striking emblems of man's faulty reasoning and afford serious reflections to a thinking mind. But they would be still more gloomy if it were not for the hope we all have that eventually right prevails over wrong and the knowledge that Masonry has, at other times in the past, successfully surmounted what appeared to be serious setbacks.

As the Era of Cathedral Building waned, Operative Masonry degenerated into gatherings of chatterers and drunkards, known as Table Lodges.

Soon after it became Speculative Masonry, a schism formed between the Ancients and the Moderns which plagued it for one hundred years.

It became almost political in the cause of the Stuarts and it had to sever its French branch because of political activity.

It survived the most bitter ecclesiastical pressure during the last half of the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century:

Two hundred years ago in June, 1737, Jones, a Philadelphia apothecary, initiated his credulous, unsophisticated apprentice named Reese in a mock ceremony including an ordeal by fire, which so burned him, he died and on all sides Masonry was denounced.

Again in 1824 the mysterious disappearance of one Morgan started an Anti-Masonic movement that resulted in a candidate (Wart) running for President of the United States on an Anti-Masonic ticket in 1832.

These seeming setbacks to Masonry in the last hundred years are in reality only jurisdictional and the institution still holds high the torch of education, toleration and fraternity and keeps its beckoning light shining brightly. Its principles are the direct antithesis of the doctrines preached by Marx and elaborated by his followers. In the first place, Communism makes a parade of man's disappointments and privations until he is receptive to its promises through pity for his own condition. To this Masonry maintains that if a man is poor and discouraged the proper kind of charity, properly proffered will ease his lot and encourage him to emphasize his strengths and build to his greater comfort and satisfaction. In the second place Communism preaches hate for all others in more fortunate or comfortable circumstances and with unfulfilled promises leads its followers to believe they can, by force, secure a larger share for themselves. Sight is lost of the fact that this is a destructive policy; one that

tears down instead of building up. As opposed to this, Masonry teaches love and toleration for the condition and viewpoint of others to the end that "harmony will prevail."

In the third respect, Communists are actuated by a desire for personal power and prestige and as the few acquire it they become more and more autocratic. As opposed to this, Masonry is a fraternity, its members working together in brotherly union, each rejoicing in the success and accomplishments of the other. To the godlessness of Marxism, we need only refer to the basic immutable qualification of all Masons; a belief in one everliving and true God.

In their beginning, both Masonry and Communism were very much in the minority and by the very nature of the institution, Masons will always be in a minority. Therein lies its best chance of survival for a minority never fully adapted to its surroundings is better able to survive a change in conditions. The majority senses its power, tends to relax and ceases to be creative.

When a minority becomes a majority it inevitably develops inherent weaknesses that eventually result in its downfall and when it acquires power by force and false promises it becomes vulnerable to education and rationalization. We all know what happened to the dinosaurs when the lush vegetation which contributed to their ungainly stature, disappeared, but we seldom think of the myriad of smaller creatures which, never dependent for their sustenance upon lofty broad leafed fronds, survived their disappearance and their species are in existence today. I need not review the economic systems which have developed huge organizations and profits in the past, only to be wiped out by scientific progress or depletion of a natural resource or the political systems that have lost their glory and power through the education and enlightenment of their vassals. A minority to be effective must be well grounded in principles and well trained in tactics and willing to make some self sacrifices.

Masonry is not a militant organization but its efforts are directed to the education and development of mind and conscience in the individual whereas Communism thrives on ignorance and insidiously injects its poison into every democratic organization and educational system. Its proponents are well trained, furtive and continually repeat unfulfilled promises.

The differences between the philosophy and ideals of Masonry and Communism are basic but our principal concern in this anniversary year of 1948 is the ruthless manner in which the followers of Karl Marx have treated freedom-loving Masons in every country they have overrun. It is not a problem of working out a mutual understanding but seems to be a question of continued existence for one or the other. Masonry is the advocate of freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of worship and it is contrary to our practice to deny these freedoms to anyone or to suppress them by force.

What then is our duty as Masons - as a Minority?

In times of crisis in the past, strong leaders such as Sir Isaac Newton, Desaguliers, Franklin, Washington and Albert Pike have come to the fore and led us into a new era of purposeful advance. But we should not sit idly by waiting for such a leader to take command for there is work which we can each do now and it "is later than we think;" later than most of its realize.

We need not be discouraged by the happenings of the last one hundred years but as described by Albert Pike in one of his poems:

"Life is a count of losses Every year
For the weak are heavier crosses Every year
But the truer life draws nigher Every year
And its morning star climbs higher Every year."

and we now face a challenge to our leadership and a call for work and action on our part.

It becomes our first duty as Masons to study and acquire such a thorough understanding of our own principles and ideals that we can exemplify them to others by our own conduct and become truly leaders in thought and by example. As Bruno Lessing said:

"The value of a man does not consist in the truths which he possesses or intends to possess but in the sincere pain which he hath taken to find out. For his powers do not increase by possessing truth but by investigating it."

Then we must so familiarize ourselves with the intrigues of Communism so that we can recognize this hydra-headed monster wherever it appears in political, social or business organizations. Then having identified its proponents we must turn the full light of education, reason and fraternity on their activities so all can see them and know them for what they really are.

The time for action is now. Masonry does not expect the impossible but it does require something of its votaries. It does not expect anyone to give of his time at the expense of his career or his security. It does not require the endowment of libraries or charitable homes at the expense of comforts for our families. It does not expect us to become great orators or talented artists at the expense of our professions or to compromise our principles for political preferment, but it does expect and require of every member, work in proportion to his capacity and ability.

Thus only can we, a minority, realize our hope that in the end, right will prevail over wrong and our Great Institution will survive another one hundred years to shed its benign rays of Faith, Hope and Charity, of Liberty, Equality and Toleration, over succeeding generations.