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FREEMASONRY IN THE COMMUNITY

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Introduction

Freemasonry has been active in the Community for almost three centuries, both in the practice of Charity in its various forms and in the contributions that generations of men, who happened to be Freemasons, have made to the history and development of their particular communities.

For two and one-half centuries Freemasonry and individual Freemasons were visible and well known in the community. For a period of forty years from the late 1930s Freemasonry gradually turned inwards, continuing to work within the community but actually withdrawing from the public consciousness and allowing a mythology to grow which has given rise to the problems experienced over the last fifteen years.

The purpose of the Masonic Week in 2002 is to re-awaken public awareness of Freemasonry and to demonstrate how it works for and in the community.

Why a national week ?

At both the national and the local level much has been done over the last decade to increase public awareness of Freemasonry and to counter the mythology. Necessarily it has been issue-led and piece meal. In some areas it has had a real effect and public attitudes are changing.

By concentrating into one week events that take place all over the country at different times we will be able to maximise publicity and reporting at a national and local level.

Above all it will be an opportunity to involve the whole membership and to demonstrate that we are a unified body representing a microcosm of society, reflecting many disparate backgrounds but united in a belief that fellowship, integrity and charity are the pillars on which the community stands.

Organisation

A Central Co-ordinating Committee is being set up to plan central events, co-ordinate what will be happening around the Constitution and to help with advice on organising - particularly in relation to publicity and media relations in general.

It is hoped that each Province will set up a local committee to co-ordinate local events, share experiences with neighbouring Provinces and the centre, and to keep the centre informed of plans as they develop so that a central data base and briefings can be built up.

As a major national exercise for which we have little experience, professional advisors will be taken on to help with planning and organisation at all levels.

What can we do ?

In essence, the Craft is not being asked to do anything new, but to co-ordinate in one week events that take place at different times in a normal year. As examples:

- a national day of religious observance with services in churches and other religious buildings
- a national open day at Masonic centres
- exhibitions in Masonic centres (or in conjunction with local Museums) showing how Freemasonry has been part of the local community [the Royal Cornish Museum at Truro is mounting an exhibition celebrating 250 years of Cornish Freemasonry]
- a dinner or ball at which presentations can be made to representatives of local charities
- a 'fun day' for disadvantaged children
- a lunch or dinner for the residents of local old people's homes
- a 'discussion' lunch or dinner for local civic, religious, professional and business leaders
- lodges or groups of lodges having a volunteer 'work day' at local hospices, hospitals and children's and old people's homes
- a 'blood donor day' at Masonic centres
- sponsor a meeting of representatives of other local voluntary organisations
- offer the local media facilities to visit centres and meet with brethren
- offer speakers for interview on local radio and television

Who should be involved ?

The whole Craft and its families. Discussions have already been held with the national Masonic Charities who will be reserving any major activities in 2002 for announcement or start up during the Masonic Week. The heads of other Masonic degrees and orders and the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland are being kept informed. This will be a major opportunity for the Craft to show its pride and confidence in our Institution.

Is this not just another charity drive ?

Emphatically not. Very early in discussions it was decided that with the existing calls of the charitable feelings of the Craft this was not an occasion for a special appeal but is an opportunity to highlight what we already do and have done for generations.

How do we start ?

As a major project solid planning and co-ordination are essential. The first step is the setting up of the Provincial Co-ordinating Committees. As working committees they should be small but reflect the various levels within the Province. Once they are in place a central meeting of representatives will be called to begin the work of planning and co-ordination.

This note has outlined some ideas but the Central Co-ordination Committee (via John Hamill, Director of Communications) would welcome others.

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