

## **LODGE FATIGUE**

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Masonry in the Round,

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BRETHREN, LODGE FATIGUE IS A DEFINITE PROBLEM IN MASONRY TODAY.

WHEN MANY OF US JOIN A LODGE, IT IS USUALLY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE COMMITTING TO ONE EVENING A MONTH FOR MEETINGS. WE ARE TOLD THAT MASONRY IS A VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION OF MEN, A FRATERNAL ORGANIZATION BASED ON A SYSTEM OF MORAL CONDUCT. WE ARE TOLD IT IS A WAY OF LIFE, WHICH SEEKS TO MAKE GOOD MEN BETTER MEN. WE ARE NOT TOLD OF THE DEMANDS IT CAN HAVE ON OUR TIME AND WE ARE SELDOM PREPARED FOR THE AMOUNT OF COMMITMENT REQUIRED BY US TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN OUR MASONIC DUTIES.

TOO MANY CANDIDATES CAN PUT PRESSURE ON A LODGE AND ITS BRETHREN TO ACCOMMODATE THOSE WANTING TO JOIN MASONRY, THOSE WISHING TO BE PASSED TO THE 2ND DEGREE AND THOSE WISHING TO BE RAISED TO THE SUBLIME DEGREE OF A MASTER MASON.

LAST YEAR, IF MY MEMORY SERVES ME CORRECT, IT WAS NECESSARY TO HAVE EMERGENT MEETINGS EVERY MONTH OF THE MASONIC YEAR TO ACCOMMODATE INITIATIONS AND DEGREE WORK. IT WAS EVEN NECESSARY FOR OUR LODGE TO ASK A SISTER LODGE TO DO SOME DEGREE WORK ON OUR BEHALF TO ACCOMMODATE THE BRETHREN WHO WERE ANXIOUS TO MOVE ON. WE WERE INDEED FORTUNATE THAT THIS LODGE WAS WILLING AND ABLE TO PROVIDE THIS ASSISTANCE.

THERE WERE SEVERAL MEETINGS WHERE WE DID TWO DEGREES A NIGHT. IN SPITE OF THIS WE STILL HAVE 10 CANDIDATES IN VARIOUS STAGES OF DEGREE WORK AND 3 NEW APPLICATIONS.

WHEN A LODGE HAS A PLETHORA OF CANDIDATES, IT REQUIRES MORE BRETHREN TO STEP UP TO THE PLATE TO ENSURE WE ARE MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR MEMBERS. IT STARTS WITH AN EXAMINING BOARD TO MEET WITH THE APPLICANT AND HIS FAMILY TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THEY MAY BE A SUITABLE CANDIDATE FOR MASONRY. ONCE BALLOTTED FOR AND ACCEPTED, WE MUST THEN SET ASIDE TIME DURING REGULAR OR EMERGENT MEETINGS TO PERFORM THE INITIATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT DEGREE WORK.

EVERY DEGREE, NO MATTER HOW OFTEN IT IS PERFORMED, REQUIRES PRACTICE TO ENSURE RITUALISTS ARE UP TO DATE ON THEIR CHARGES AND CAPABLE OF PERFORMING THEIR WORK. BACKUPS ARE NEEDED FOR EACH RITUALIST TO ENSURE THAT THE DEGREE WILL BE DONE PROPERLY IN CASE THE PRIMARY RITUALIST IS UNAVAILABLE DUE TO ILLNESS OR WORK OR VACATION. THE MENTORS AND SPONSORS SPEND COUNTLESS HOURS PREPARING THE CANDIDATES WHO ARE GOING THROUGH THE DEGREES.

LODGES THAT HAVE A HEAVY CASELOAD OF DEGREE WORK MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO MANAGE THE DAY-TO-DAY WORK OF THE LODGE. ITEMS SUCH AS MASONIC EDUCATION MAY BE LEFT OFF THE AGENDA TO ACCOMMODATE THE DEGREE WORK. WE CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT TO BECOME DEGREE FACTORIES, BUT WE MUST FIND A HAPPY BALANCE BETWEEN EDUCATION AND DEGREE WORK.

FELLOWSHIP MAY SUFFER AS BRETHREN LEAVE FOR THEIR HOMES DUE TO THE LATENESS OF THE MEETINGS INSTEAD OF SOCIALIZING AFTER LODGE. THE JUNIOR WARDEN'S JOB BECOMES MORE ONEROUS AS HE HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SEEING REFRESHMENT IS AVAILABLE AT ALL MEETINGS. THE DEMANDS ON THE BRETHREN TO ASSIST THE JUNIOR WARDEN CAN BE HEAVY.

WHEN LODGES ARE BUSY ACCOMMODATING THE NEEDS OF THE CANDIDATES AND THE NEWER BRETHREN WHO ARE MOVING THROUGH THE DEGREES, IT CAN LEAD US TO SHORTCHANGE OUR PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY EVENTS SUCH AS BLOOD DONOR CLINICS. IT MAY REDUCE OUR DESIRE TO VISIT OUR BROTHER LODGES DUE TO THE TIME IT TAKES US AWAY FROM FAMILY. IT MAY LEAD TO SOME BROTHERS RESISTING TAKING ON ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY BY NOT ACCEPTING A CHAIR BECAUSE OF THE TIME COMMITMENT REQUIRED. THESE ARE ALL AREAS OF CONCERN.

THAT BEING SAID BRETHREN, I AM OF THE HUMBLE POSITION THAT HAVING TOO MANY CANDIDATES AND MEN LINING UP TO MOVE THROUGH THE DEGREES DOES NOT RESULT IN FATIGUE BUT ON THE CONTRARY IS INVIGORATING AND HEALTHY. ALL THE CONCERNS LISTED ABOVE CAN BE OVERCOME.

THE FATIGUE THAT I FEEL IS A PROBLEM TO MASONRY OCCURS IN LODGES WHERE WE ARE FAILING TO ATTRACT NEW MASONS. I WAS INVOLVED IN A LODGE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE LODGE I SERVE TODAY. THIS OTHER LODGE WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE ONE CANDIDATE A YEAR; DEGREE WORK WAS SPORADIC AND IN A FIVE YEAR PERIOD I RECALL ONLY SEVEN MEETINGS WHERE DEGREE WORK WAS PERFORMED. IT WAS EVEN NECESSARY FOR THIS LODGE TO SOLICIT BRETHREN FROM OTHER LODGES TO BE ABLE TO PERFORM THE DEGREES.

BRETHREN IN THIS SITUATION TEND TO BECOME COMPLACENT AND BLASÉ ABOUT THEIR MASONIC DUTIES. THEY ARE NOT MOTIVATED TO ATTEND LODGE, PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OR SUPPORT MASONIC WORKS. THE LACK OF CANDIDATES AND MASONS MOVING THROUGH THE DEGREES RESULTS IN A FATIGUE THAT IF NOT UNCHECKED OR ADDRESSED WILL LEAD TO A LODGE GOING INTO DARKNESS.

IN CLOSING BRETHREN I BELIEVE THAT YOU MUST AGREE WITH ME THAT MASONRY FLOURISHES IN LODGES WHERE CANDIDATES ARE PLENTIFUL AND DEGREE WORK IS A NORMAL PART OF THE LODGE MEETING. THE FATIGUE FACTOR THAT THREATENS MANY IN MASONRY TODAY IS FOUND IN LODGES THAT ARE NOT ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS.

IT MUST BECOME A PRIORITY FOR EACH AND EVERY MASON IN GENERAL AND FOR GRAND LODGE IN PARTICULAR TO LOOK AT THESE SITUATIONS AND FIND A WAY TO HELP THESE LODGES REFRESH THEMSELVES.