

Masonic Digest

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MASONIC RELIEF

A feature of our times is the number of organizations that include in their program some form of philanthropy. Much of this is made known to the public in order that the activity may have the necessary financial support. The good works of societies like the Masonic Fraternity are not so generally known. Yet Masons have been engaged in philanthropy for centuries.

Masonic Relief can be traced back to the Middle Ages when our ancient brethren were members of a mason's guild. As such they contributed to a fund for the relief of distressed members of the Craft and to help those unemployed. This practice of relief was continued when operative masonry declined and the speculative features became more prominent. With the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 the tradition of Masonic Relief was followed. The first available minutes of this Grand Lodge (1723) record the appointment of a Charity Committee, and the first dues paid were for charitable purposes and not for administration expenses.

Today an imposing array of Masonic institutions testify that the Fraternity has remained faithful to the Masonic tradition of relief: Hospitals, homes for the aged, homes for children, homes for the care of tubercular patients, and so forth, are to be found throughout the Masonic world. In addition there is home relief, that is, the support of children and the aged in private homes. Usually these undertakings are carried out by Grand Lodges. On occasion a Grand Lodge may draw on its fund of benevolence to help in some local or national disaster. From this same fund come the grants made to distressed brethren. Last year the Grand Lodge of England paid out approximately \$120,000.00 in grants to petitioners, equivalent to about \$20.00 for each lodge on

the register. The Grand Lodge of New Brunswick during the same period made grants totaling \$2,050.00, or about \$45.00 per lodge. Usually the lodge of the distressed brother also contributes something in such cases. Some Lodges, however, take pride in assuming the full responsibility of relief for their distressed members. Thus throughout the world lodges are quietly helping the needy Mason to' an extent not known, but there is reason to believe the amount expended annually must be well over one million dollars.

Masonic Relief in North America is co-ordinated through the Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada, which was organized sixty-three years ago. Its aims and objects are:-

1. Detection of unworthy Masons and imposters preying upon the Fraternity.
2. Co-ordination of the various forms of Masonic relief throughout the U. S. A. and Canada.
3. Promotion of effective methods of handling cases of Inter-jurisdictional Relief.
4. To act as the agency in organizing Masonic Relief in times of national disaster.
5. Provide a meeting place for discussion of the varied problems of Masonic Relief.

To read the proceedings of the Masonic Relief Association is to discover that Masonic Relief is more than a cash donation. In many other ways are Masons and their families assisted. For instance, a member of a Vermont lodge, who lived near Buffalo, was motoring with his wife in Canada. When nearing Toronto his car was involved in an accident. He was killed and his wife was injured. Fortunately the policeman who investigated the accident was a Mason. He informed the Masonic Relief authorities who promptly offered assistance, which the widow accepted. She requested a Masonic funeral. Arrangements were made through the Vermont lodge to have a Buffalo lodge conduct the funeral service. A grave was secured and preparations for the burial were made. Within four hours after the accident was reported an ambulance was on the way from Buffalo to Toronto for the remains and a car was sent to bring back the wife.

Typical of Masonic goodwill is the pathetic case of a poorly clad man who was found dead in the street of a city in Louisiana. His only possession was a small bundle which contained a tattered Masonic apron and an expired membership card in a lodge on the Pacific coast. The local Masonic Relief Agency notified this

lodge, which replied that the man was a suspended member and therefore expenses for burial could not be authorized. But members of the Relief Agency felt that the man must have prized his Masonic connection because he had clung to his lambskin apron and treasured this honorable emblem. Moved by this sentiment they buried the brother with appropriate Masonic honours, defraying the expense of the burial plot and the funeral. Their action was reported to the lodge of the deceased brother. The members who were present when the letter was read made a tree-will offering sufficient to reimburse the Relief Agency for the expenditures made.

One might ask why the Fraternity's philanthropy is reserved mostly for members of the Craft and their families. Well, it is natural and right for a man to consider first the needs of his own family, for a church to look after its flock, for a government to consider the welfare of its own nationals before those of other governments. And so, the world over, those we know best, those united in the highest bonds come first. Moreover, the benevolence fund of a Grand Lodge is usually a trust fund, limited in purpose and mainly for the relief of "all poor, distressed worthy Masons, their widows and orphans." Yet individual lodges may, and do, extend a helping hand to worthy causes not connected with the Fraternity. And relief as a tenet of a Mason's profession is intended to apply to all mankind.

There is a growing tendency on the part of governments to provide for the relief of the family and individual to an extent never imagined by our early Masonic forefathers, who lived in a world where relief was of a private, and not public, nature. Social legislation, such as 'old-age pensions and family allowances, together with the broadening scope of organizations like the Red Cross, are likely to reduce the need for monetary Masonic Relief. But there will always be worthy people of ample means who find themselves destitute, be it of friends or destitute of mental or of spiritual courage. To such it is our moral and spiritual obligation to extend the hand of relief.

And so, quietly and unobserved, worthy Masons either individually or collectively will do their work of benevolence so long as the Fraternity remains true to its ideal.

THE COMMUNIST CREED

The Communist true-believer denies God, yet in his way he is deeply religious. He thinks he serves eternal truth and he believes that he is fighting to free humanity from all evil. In this

cause he exhibits a devotion and self-sacrifice rarely shown in disciples of religious creeds. To him the Communist party is a union of the faithful and the Soviet Union is the Church Militant. For a Bible he has the writings of men like Marx, Lenin and Stalin,

The Communist creed assumes that a state, no matter how governed, is an instrument of violence. "While there is a state," wrote Lenin, "there is no freedom. When there is freedom there will be no state." Eliminate the machine of the state and all men will live in perfect freedom and happiness. So the first objective is the destruction of all state. When the state is destroyed a dictatorship takes over to prepare men for perfect freedom. When dictatorship throughout the world is established and private ownership is abolished, all war, civil and international, will cease.

According to the Communist creed the moral goal is to achieve the destruction of the state and the moral duty of man is to serve in establishing a Communist dictatorship throughout the earth. The Communist believes the achievement of this supreme moral end justifies any means, fair or foul, including war, murder, breaking of the pledged word. Or in the words of Lenin, "It is necessary to use any ruse, cunning, unlawful method, evasion, concealment of truth."

The aim to establish Communist world dictatorship is unchanging and unchangeable. The foreign policy of a Communist dictatorship is directed toward this goal and it is always considered in terms of military strategy. The offensive is directed by the general staff of the Communist world army from its headquarters in the most powerful of the Communist dictatorships. Terrible clashes with democratic states is recognized by the apostles of Communism as inevitable because the two cannot exist side by side for a long period. Ultimately one must conquer.

Strange indeed is the Communist creed, that all mankind must be enslaved and suffer the terrors of a secret police system under a dictatorship in order that human nature may be prepared to live without a state in perfect freedom and happiness.

Look well to the east !

THE MASONIC DIGEST is published quarterly for the purpose of giving the Craft the essence of timely articles and addresses on Freemasonry. Distribution is made possible through the co-operation of Lodge Secretaries. Therefore if you receive a copy you are indebted to the Secretary of your Lodge for mailing it with the Lodge Notice of Meeting.