

The following is an extract from a somewhat longer paper by Bro. S. Brent Morris 33° from the State of Maryland USA. It generally deplores the loss of craft members while the A & A Rite prospers at the expense of the Royal Arch. In the States, it is traditional for the GM to have only a year's reign, compared with three years in Australia.

### **Traditional Masonic bodies are overburdened with constricting rules and nitpicking regulations.**

We suffer from short-tenured leaders who are given almost limitless power and no time to use it effectively. Grand Lodges and Grand York Rite Bodies have little managerial continuity. Most Grand Lodges elect a new Grand Master each year, who barely has time to pick a motto and a flower before he's running around the state on the grand visitation circuit. He may start a new program or institute a new policy, but it will fade as fast as his flower without the wholehearted support of his successors, and they may have their own hobbyhorses to ride. Only the Scottish Rite, with its long-serving state leaders, has created a managerial structure in Masonry that allows organizational continuity of significant programs and policies, rather than the mindless maintenance of the status quo.

Most Masonic bodies have massively centralized authority, greater than that found in almost any other voluntary associations. Masonic presiding officers, both by tradition and by regulation, have extreme discretion in administering their enormous powers. Grand Lodges have this centralized authority, an executive officer who can rule by decree, and a network of District Deputy Grand Officers to enforce their rules and regulations. None of this makes it fun for local bodies. By contrast, the allied Masonic bodies that are showing growth lack a network to enforce the central authority. Their local groups are largely autonomous and have wide discretion in conducting their affairs. This freedom from central interference may be what is more appealing about an A.M.D. Council than a symbolic Lodge. These allied Masonic bodies are "lean and mean"-small organizations that can be flexible and can quickly respond to their members' needs.

Grand Lodges today are multi-million dollar operations, but they lack the managerial and organizational continuity they need to thrive. The foremost management theory today holds that decision making and authority should be delegated to the lowest possible level where local managers best understand the immediate needs of the organization. What if we elected Grand Masters to five year or longer terms? What if a Grand Master could start a program, nurture it, and see it to established and accepted in his jurisdiction? What if Lodges were given the flexibility and responsibility to make decisions for themselves? And what if Masons were encouraged and rewarded to form and participate in new Lodges?

Masonry is declining in membership as are nearly all other voluntary associations. Our members continue to be enthusiastic about the Masonic experience, just not in Lodges. There is hope for the Craft if we can focus our members' enthusiasm back at the main body of Masonry, but this will require difficult changes. Some of the most urgent changes are administrative, but they strike at the heart of our Masonic culture as it has evolved over centuries. Our basic rewards structure is predicated upon presiding, and no one wants to reduce rewards. There is no reason why accepted management techniques cannot be used in Masonry nor any reason why control cannot be returned to local Lodges. If we are not willing to put changes to a vote in our Grand Lodges, then our members will continue to vote with their feet and to move their Masonic energies to more rewarding activities. And if we could conduct post-election polls, we'd probably find a lot of these voters saying, "I love Masonry. It's Grand Lodges I can't stand."

[Ref. Peanuts Charles Schutz]

Linus Van Pelt >>"I love humanity. It's people I can't stand"