

E A R L Y T O B E D

(Texas Grand Lodge Magazine)

In their campaign to stimulate attendance at Masonic Lodges, Washington Grand Masters and Grand Lodge Officers in recent years have emphasized the desirability of early closing. Worshipful Masters and their subordinate officers have been urged to speed routine business and finish by 10 o'clock.

In a study of the reasons why many lay Masons fail to attend their Lodges, one of the outstanding factors was found to be late hours. Communications were not properly planned for early closing. Consequently, many members, particularly the more elderly, are conspicuous by their absence. As men grow older, they are more inclined to spend their evening by the fireside and it requires something special to lure them out after dinner.

It has also been found that much time is lost by the failure of the presiding officer to expedite matters. Consequently, meetings are unduly delayed and drag on well toward midnight. No wonder that so few remain for refreshments and the enjoyment of the social hour. Most of them have to rise early for their work the following day. If they do attend, they must leave early for necessary rest.

This campaign, sponsored by the Grand Lodge, is bearing fruit. Officers coming up through the places and stations are being trained to make their meetings interesting as well as short and snappy. Earlier hours are resulting, and in time attendance is bound to increase.

The wise Worshipful Master has his program prepared in advance of a Communication. If it is the stated, he should consult with his Secretary and make note of the matters which require consideration. Some questions, naturally, are controversial and may cause protracted debate. The Worshipful Master should be able to control proceedings firmly but not arbitrarily, without undue waste of time. Routine matters should be disposed of with dispatch. An able presiding officer, acting with judgment and tact, can go through the program to an early closing without difficulty.

When degree work is on the trestleboard, much time can be saved by careful preparation. The Worshipful Master, or any subordinate who has charge of this particular communication, should in advance make the station and floor assignments, advising those who are to take part so that they will be fully prepared. By following this plan, no time will be lost between candidates. As one leaves, the other can

enter, with all who are to take part ready to proceed. Thus can time be saved and early closing assured.

It is well for the incoming Worshipful Master to plan his program for the entire year. This can be done and by doing so he can book well in advance Grand Lodge officers and others whose time is much in demand. This method will make the year's program run smoothly, resulting in improved attendance and better spirit of cooperation. Always, planning should keep early closing in mind. Remember, your Brethren have to go to work tomorrow.



WORKING TOOLS OF A FELLOWCRAFT MASON

(New Zealand Freemason)

Much has been written about the working tools of a Fellowcraft Freemason, and a good deal about the charge with which they are presented to the candidate in the Second or Fellowcraft Degree. Our ritual abounds in brief patches of beautiful language, but in this charge the beauty of language is sustained from beginning to end; the imagery is apt and vivid; the whole charge flows with a graceful inevitability which makes it one of the most memorable parts of the ritual, and it has one advantage over some other charges; it is not too condensed. The candidate can follow it and absorb it at the first hearing. Sometimes a newly-made Fellowcraft is asked what part of the ceremony has impressed him most; the answer is often the Working Tools charge.

The lesson of the Working Tools in this degree is the lesson of community living. Real freedom is not freedom to do precisely as one likes, without let, hindrance, or inhibition. That would be an infantile form of freedom. Real freedom consists in willingly entering into such contractual agreements as will ensure our happiness and other people's. That is an ordered form of freedom, an adult giving away something for something of more value, and on multilateral basis. From the infantile point of view it may be freedom to take possession of any object that one sees; from the adult point of view freedom of action is better secured by having agreed means of acquiring ownership of anything, and then respecting the rights of anyone who has taken the agreed steps. In that way we can be assured that most other people will respect rights we have similarly acquired to other property.

The community may decide that the few recalcitrants or untrustworthy persons shall be compelled to conform, and appoint law enforcement officers to see that what has been agreed upon in the community shall not be disregarded. Hence we have the conception of freedom within the law.