

THE NEW ZEALAND FREEMASON

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INSTALLATION ADDRESS OF M.W. BRO. SIR EDWIN BATE, GRAND MASTER

Delivered at Wellington on 28 November, 1973.

I have completed one year in this office and enter upon a - second year enriched by experience, and inspired by having seen the heart of masonry beating strongly throughout New Zealand. I have personally visited all 13 masonic districts in the country and have received the utmost kindness and consideration everywhere. I have been given many touching expressions of loyalty, support and esteem far beyond my deserts.

I am profoundly grateful to so many brethren that I cannot hope to express my thanks to them adequately. Especially am I grateful to R.W. Bro. Gilchrist, my Deputy Grand Master, and to all of the Provincial Grand Masters for their efficiency in the management of their respective districts and their personal kindness to me when in their areas. The Grand Wardens, R.W. Bros. Salisbury and Sharpe and the other Grand Lodge officers have likewise taken every opportunity to assist me.

As I have met my brethren from time to time, I have tried to urge them to take a constructive attitude to freemasonry, a new look, as it were, at the Craft in general, and their own lodges in particular. I have urged them to cherish our heritage, preserve the essentials inviolate, and yet assess and respond to the challenges of the present. Thus may we continue to attract and inspire men of all ages to achievement, to character building, and the exemplification of our grand principles.

I have seen freemasonry in action from Kaikohe in the north to Invercargill in the south. In so doing, I have tried to meet every brother personally at each of the meetings which I have attended. This man to man approach to my office has I believe, helped me to judge the strength of our Craft which is found just as much in our master masons, as in our officers and those brethren who have graduated to rank in Grand Lodge. I tell you that freemasonry is in good heart.

It has been a great pleasure on my travels to meet and talk with so many of our Maori brethren. The Maori responds with sincerity to the principles we stand for. He is proud of the purity of his language, the poetry of his race, the romantic beauty of his folk-lore. All of these traditions enable him to feel very much at home in the masonic fraternity. He is a natural orator and he enjoys our ceremonial and our ritual. He is gregarious, and so he happily participates in our fellowship. Our Maori brother is among the most loyal to his country, and also to the Craft.

Masonic church services are regularly held in many areas and that I am sure is to be commended. I believe we should seek to have the privileges of attending masonic church services at regular intervals. Our faith in the Almighty Architect, our hope in immortality, and our charity to all men are foundation stones of our institution.

It can be accurately affirmed that we are a religious although undenominational institution. We should more often endeavour to demonstrate the fact publicly. By so doing, I believe we do a service to the Church by our public affirmation of our faith, and we render a service to ourselves also. Freemasonry is no substitute for church or for one's religious observances and worship. We should all be better churchmen by reason of the fact that we are freemasons.

I spoke of providing worthy men with opportunities of forming a favourable opinion of us. Every candidate is asked to affirm that he sought initiation because he had already formed that favourable opinion of our institution. Masonry has in the past had very few "shop windows" by which the uninitiated might look through and form such an opinion. We should provide more of these opportunities. This is a subject well

worthy of study. The most reliable shop window of all is, of course, our own individual conduct in our own communities, and our readiness to be known as freemasons, and indeed proclaim the fact.

Fellowship includes friendship and ranks as one of the brightest gems in the masonic diadem. We must continue to nurture this attribute. We need especially to consider this subject in relation to our recent candidates. Every member on his initiation should be able to form a friendly and personal relationship with his brethren forthwith. His first month as a freemason is the most critical period of his career. He must receive guidance and encouragement, and if at all possible, should be given some work to do.

In the context of what I have been saying about friendship and fellowship, let me say that I had hoped we might have had this evening, the pleasure of the presence of Most Excellent First Grand Principal of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New Zealand. Very much to his regret and mine also, unavoidable commitments prevented this, but he wrote me to express his disappointment in not being able to accept my invitation and thus emphasise in a positive form, the close fraternal ties which link the Craft and Royal Arch Freemasonry.

A final word on fellowship. It is to say that in my opinion, the very noticeable trend to identify our ladies increasingly with our social activities is well advised. The prosperity of the Craft depends more on the co-operation of our ladies than has hitherto been acknowledged.

The splendid work of our almoners is beyond praise. They will never know the joy, relief and comfort they bring to the folk in need of help, to whom they render assistance so willingly. I have been particularly pleased to note that in some lodges, the almoner is regularly assisted by groups of master masons.

Let us reflect briefly upon our works of benevolence. Our income for purposes of benevolence during last year, the largest source being contribution from lodges, was \$203,847.00. There are 203 current annuities being paid to needy folk totalling \$56,276.00, educational bursaries totalling \$10,238.00 per annum while grants made by the Board last year for various charitable purposes amounted to \$33,161.00. Our Fund of Benevolence at last balance date amounted to \$2,108,387.00. This alone is a massive record of what in one year our fraternity has done, in the spirit of caring for others, but that is not nearly the whole story.

We have by common consent been engaging in local masonic works of benevolence using the medium of trusts incorporated under The Charitable Trusts Act. Their good works take many forms. In particular, with the aid of Government subsidies and often aided by grants from the Board of Benevolence, 'accommodation has been provided on very reasonable terms to widows, elderly and infirm persons who were previously indifferently housed or homeless. In the aggregate, these trusts provide approximately 400 flats, over 40 hospital beds and several more similar projects are in the planning stages. The capital outlay already involved in these works amount to about \$4,000,000. The grants made by the Board of Benevolence in aid of these projects exceeds \$430,000. I have talked with many of the residents in these flats throughout the country, Their expressions of gratitude are very touching indeed, and are a well deserved reward to the brethren in those areas where these works have been undertaken.

I close with a pledge which was given by a very early Grand Master, Sir Francis Bell, who was installed on 25 April, 1894. "I pledge myself to be the faithful servant of the Craft and so long as I continue its Grand Master, to be to the best of my ability impartial, just and true, to uphold the just rights, privileges and powers which we have in accordance with ancient custom assumed, and which we will never surrender or abate. I will conserve every tradition, every ritual and every custom, and I will endeavour so to guard and use the power and authority you have entrusted me with, that when I lay them down it may be found that the Grand Lodge has not suffered by its choice." This pledge I now give to you all.