

Notes address given by W. J. Fagnano, Grand Master, before the  
Lodge of Shreveport on Sunday, June 28, 1936.

M-610

Thank you Brother McLees.

Brethren and friends: Speaking as one and for the visitors attending this communication, we extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the brethren of Shreveport and vicinity for their cordial reception and hospitality, and I am sure that not only the visitors are looking forward to that concrete evidence of hospitality that Brother McLees has just mentioned, the breakfast of ham and eggs that is soon to come, but also the brethren of Shreveport who have been on the job long before daybreak.

Brother McLees has asked the rhetorical question: Why have Masons assembled here from all over Louisiana and ~~parts of Texas to~~ <sup>the U.S., and also from a foreign</sup> *Country to* witness this ceremony? The answer is simple: because we welcome the opportunity to fraternise with our brethren; because we want to witness this splendid demonstration and interesting program; because the same spirit motivates the Masons of today as our Brethren of Old, who often made long journeys on horseback to meet one another or to extend charity and relief to brethren in distress.

My talk today, since it is to be addressed not only to Masons but also to non-masons should be on a subject that is of interest to both. Therefore I have chosen the subject, "The Mason as a Citizen."

For the benefit of the non-masons I must first explain that the standard of ethics in Freemasonry throughout the world today is based upon "The ancient charges and Regulations" adopted by the Grand Lodge of England in 1722. These "Ancient Charges and Regulations" usually called the "Old Charges" were copied from the laws and regulations of the Ancient Operative Masons, that had been handed down from time immemorial.

I shall quote <sup>to</sup> extracts from these "Old Charges" that apply to "The Mason as a Citizen" (Quote) "A Mason is a peaceable subject to the Civil powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concerned in Plots and Conspiracies against the peace and welfare of the

nation, nor behave himself undutifully to the inferior magistrates" (Close quote) (Quote) "Therefore no private piques or quarrels must be brought within the door of the Lodge, far less any quarrels about religion or nations or state policy"(Close quote) In more modern language, then, every mason is bound to have respect for and obey the Civil Law of his country and no brother or candidate can be questioned as to his peculiar religious faith or political opinion, nor can such discussions be permitted in any assembly of the Craft.

At the time the Old Charges were written, conditions of government were entirely different to those which prevail in this nation and state today. People were ruled by kings, and often the dynasty to which a king belonged was challenged in its right to rule by one or more rival and opposing dynasties. Under such conditions of government a rebellion or a revolution was almost the only method by which a government could be changed. What was then a "political party" was a group of adherents of some particular dynasty. Almost every then existing organization, including even churches and schools, took sides with one dynasty against another. You may see from this how extraordinary was the Masonic Law; it took the position that this system of warring parties, fighting over the very existence of government, was hurtful to mankind and a great danger to a people, and that it ought to be replaced by the principle of goodwill and peaceable and harmonious cooperation. It was a part of the mission of Masonry to stand for that principle and it consistently kept itself aloof from the warfare of contending parties and forbade any member to take part in them as a Mason.

Here in America, we have no kings or dynasties but we continue to have parties. Instead of quarreling with each other as to what the government shall BE, our parties are in contention as to what the government shall DO; and instead of deciding which one or another shall

triumph by means of rebellions and revolutions, our parties make use of political campaigns, and while these campaigns do not result in the shedding of blood, they often result in a great deal of bitterness, ill will and general discord. In the face of this modern situation our Craft continues to take the same position that it took at an earlier time; it believes that the welfare of the state is not to be secured by bitter partisan strife but that it can only be secured by goodwill, toleration and patient friendly cooperation. Therefore the Masonic Craft refuses to participate in partisan politics, and it forbids its members to do so in the name of Masonry.

Perhaps we can now define the Masonic concept of citizenship. The Mason as a citizen should not exalt personal interest or party interest. In all of his relations with the community and the State he should be motivated and controlled by the principle of fraternalism, which means that as one of the people, he works for and with the people in the spirit of goodwill and for the sake of the general good.

This does not interfere with a Mason's individual freedom. For example, as an individual, he may be an active worker in some political party; that is for him to decide. But as a Mason he will not hate those who differ with him, nor enter into unjust intrigues against them, nor will he set up his own party in opposition to the public good. The same holds good in respect to social life; his religious belief or even his pride in his nationality or descent. So long as he is loyal to the principle of fraternalism in all his dealings with others, Freemasonry asks nothing further from him.

From this you may understand why no group of Masons ever interferes with matters of church, state or society, or joins one party as against another. However it is not inconsistent for the Craft to

perform at times such services to the community as stand by common consent on a level beyond all parties.

The Craft often appears publicly to lay the cornerstone of some public building or otherwise to assist in similar ceremonies of a general kind. Above all the Craft has always been an aider and helper in all forms of general charity, homes, orphanages, hospitals, and the less special forms of public relief.

For many generations the Craft has been especially friendly to public schools, not along because of its own motto, "Let there be light," but because the children of every family in a community may enjoy educational privileges regardless of race, creed or party.

To sum up: A Mason as a Citizen is guided by the principle of fraternalism, individual freedom for all, and all for the general good, or as the "Old Charges" state "a peaceable subject to the Civil Powers.."

I thank you.

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I now have the <sup>special</sup> ~~privilege~~ <sup>and pleasure</sup> of introducing one of Shreveport's own Citizens. One who has been very active in our Masonic Craft. I refer to none other than Most Worshipful Brother Philip Lieber, Junior Past Grand Master of our Grand Lodge, and at present the Illustrious Potentate of El Karulah Temple, Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, here in Shreveport. *Brother Lieber*