



Politics and Freemasonry

by W. Phillip W. Weiss

Politics is the art of swaying public opinion to achieve power. People who practice this art are called politicians. Politicians maneuver for power. They do this by playing to public sentiment to gain the backing of the public. There is virtually no limit on the methods politicians will use to gain that backing. The most common method is political debate. There are few features of human civilization that are more divisive than political debate. Inject political debate into any social gathering and the result will quickly be rancor, anger, frustration, accusations, recriminations and hard feelings.

Today, almost all our social, public, educational, and cultural institutions are corrupted by politics. Every issue is spun for political gain. No issue is off-limits. Crime, sex, war, religion, gender, you name it, become fair game for the politician and their backers. No issue is too sensitive that a politician searching for an issue will not exploit for political advantage. Such is the nature of politics. Politics itself intrinsically is neither good nor bad. What makes politics good or bad is how people abuse it for personal gain. Nevertheless, people naturally are interested in politics. Politics affects every aspect of our lives. Therefore, every person has a stake in politics. That includes Freemasons.

Freemasons are good citizens. Being good citizens, Freemasons deeply care about politics. It is the rare exceptional Freemason that does not harbor strong political opinions. It is virtually impossible for a Freemason to be otherwise. The fundamental tenets of Freemasonry, brotherly love, relief, and truth, establish a standard of conduct that directly shapes how Freemasons interact, or should interact with society, as a matter of policy. By being a Freemason, the Masonic brother is expected to act in a certain prescribed way. Thus, Freemasonry establishes a standard of conduct based upon a set of principles that some could interpret as being political.

Yet, Freemasonry is not a political club. The purpose of the Lodge is inherently not political. That is because the tenets of Freemasonry are not open to debate. These tenets shape the nature and character of the Freemason and of the Lodge. Any attempts to weaken the Freemason's adherence to these tenets through political debate pose a direct threat to the integrity of the Lodge as a Masonic institution. For this reason, when entering the Lodge, every Masonic brother who truly cares about the Lodge and the Craft must subdue his political passions and not bring political debate into the Lodge. This does not mean that a Freemason must become politically mute or hide his political convictions. What it does mean is that the Freemason must not use the Lodge to expound his politics or promote a partisan or even non-partisan political agenda. To act in such a selfish way would be Masonic sacrilege and would distort the Lodge into something it cannot be – a sectarian organization.

This does not mean that Freemasons cannot engage in casual talk about politics. But what it does mean is that this casual talk cannot be included in the Lodge's official agenda or be treated as something other than an extraneous distraction that serves no useful purpose inside the Lodge and has no bearing on the Lodge's mission which is to take worthy and well qualified men and through a prescribed ritual that is immune to outside political influence transform them into Freemasons. By remaining faithful to our fundamental tenets, we as Freemasons can protect and preserve the integrity of the Lodge and keep it whole for future generations.

However, if we as Freemasons allow the Lodge to become corrupted by politics, for example by including political discourse in the Lodge's official agenda, the results would be catastrophic for the Craft. There would be nothing to stop a Lodge from adopting a political litmus test as a condition for gaining admission to the Lodge or a Master purging from the Lodge all who disagree with the Master's political line. In either case, the Lodge would cease functioning as a Masonic organization and quickly become a source for political patronage, with the Lodge's financial assets becoming a political slush fund. So, it is incumbent on every Freemason of every station and rank to refrain from injecting politics into the Lodge and instead act responsibly to maintain harmony inside the Lodge and by doing so preserve the Lodge intact for posterity.