

JAE - The future of Masonry - **a perspective from GLAofSwitzerland** (World Conference of GL, Paris - 2008)

In the mid 1930s there was a plebiscite in Switzerland, initiated by Fonjallaz, a highranking officer of the Swiss Army, to forbid Freemasonry in Switzerland. Thankfully, 3 out of 4 people voted against it. Nevertheless, instead of taking this as vote of confidence, from that time on Freemasonry hid away. Grand Masters only rarely made any statement in public. The same effect was seen more widely across the whole of Europe. With the pre-World War 2 rise National Socialism in Germany, Communism in the East, and Franco's Fascism in Spain, Brethren became scared to admit their membership in the craft. Since that time, statistics show that our membership's been in continuous decline. In my view, there's been a direct link between our hiding away and this decline in membership.

The round table discussion in Den Haag unveiled how different the various countries appear in the profane world, and how more or less successful they are in attracting new members to join the chain of brotherhood. But I think every country must find its own way how best to communicate freemasonry.

It's only in recent years that Swiss lodges have started informing the profane world again about Freemasonry, notably in conjunction with Jubilee celebrations. One of the key objectives is to adequately inform the public about the basics of Masonic principles. We have to give Freemasonry a voice and a face.

In Switzerland, Freemasonry has slowly sunk almost into insignificance. It's time to inform the profane world that Freemasonry is not at ail an obscure alliance, but rat~rer an organisation of great integrity and goodwill to ail. It places mankind at the centre and promotes fraternity, fundamentai rights and dignity for ail.

We will place high demands on our Brethren. They will have to be well educated and informed. Within his own profane environment, each Brother must be capable of explaining what Masonry is, what our principles and rules are, and what we're aiming to achieve.

Why should a man join the craft? Egoistically motivated, a man today is trained to fight for his professional position or his promotion. With the obligations of both a job and probably also career-related further education, little time is left over for other activities. He is therefore hindered from doing more, even if he's aware that other important priorities should _exist in a man'ss life.

It's up to us to better inform the "uninitiated" man that Freemasonry is an opportunity to meet men with similar interests, to exchange ideas and to acquire knowledge, finally aiming to improve our own human qualitates. Young men must be informed that Free Masonry is a lifestyle; a living school that cannot be replaced by any other teaching or training.

Jean-Paul said: we need to find a way to communicate!

So together with my Brethren we aim to inspire, to educate and to communicate - inside and outside the craft!