

Communism and Freemasonry

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I wish at the outset to make it emphatically clear that I have developed this paper as an individual member of the Craft. It is not and must not be interpreted as the official voice of Saskatchewan Freemasonry. I personally accept full and complete responsibility for every thought and conclusion embodied in this material. Saskatchewan Freemasonry has never officially considered or taken a stand on the subject of Communism and Freemasonry.

I was assigned and accepted the task of developing a paper on the subject of Communism and Freemasonry for the Ninth Annual Conference of Western Canadian Grand Lodges. There will be no attempt in this paper to evade the issue or to endeavour to phrase my conclusions in such manner as to please either those who now hear it or those who may subsequently read it. There will, however, be a very definite attempt to deal with the subject fearlessly and honestly. My intention is not to remain behind any Masonic "Iron Curtain" but rather to come right out into the open and say what I think Freemasonry should do about the deceitful ramifications of this dangerous, cancerous growth.

The Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America in 1947 unanimously adopted the following resolution:

"Masonry abhors communism as being repugnant to its conception of the dignity of the individual personality, destructive of the basic rights which are the Divine Heritage of all men and inimical to the fundamental Masonic tenet of faith in God."

The Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin delivered a paper on the subject "Freemasonry and Communism" at the 1948 Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America and I would recommend a copy of that paper being printed as an appendix to the official record of this Conference of Western Canadian Grand Lodges.

The Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Maryland appointed a committee of five past Grand Masters and the Deputy Grand Master and charged this committee with the responsibility of investigating communism from a Masonic standpoint. This committee in its report to

Grand Lodge gave it as their opinion that it was entirely proper for Grand Lodge to consider the subject of Communism and Freemasonry.

Most Worshipful Brother G. Roy Long, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia in his Grand Master's address at the Annual Communication of that Grand Lodge in 1948 fearlessly dealt with the subject of Communism and Freemasonry.

However, I am not looking for excuses for dealing with this subject nor am I looking for precedent.

I do not intend to deal with the subject in a manner similar to those authorities I have referred to in the opening paragraphs of this paper. I simply make those references as a matter of record and as a source of information for anyone desirous of further studying the subject.

Freemasonry forbids the discussion of religion or politics in a Masonic Lodge. The prohibition of such discussion has its origin in the Anderson Constitution of 1722, Charge 6, Section 2, which reads in part as follows:

"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, we being only, as Masons, of the Catholic Religion above mention'd; we are also of all Nations, Tongues, Kindreds, and Languages, and are resolv'd against all Politicks, as what never yet conduc'd to the Welfare of the Lodge, nor ever will. This charge has been always strictly enjoin'd and observ'd; but especially ever since the Reformation in Britain, or the Dissent and Secession of these Nations from the Communion of Rome."

That Prohibition cannot and must not be interpreted as applying to the discussion of a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, a discussion of a belief that that Supreme Being has revealed his will to men. Those religious subjects have "the grip and word" necessary to admission to a Masonic Lodge. Sectarian creeds, doctrines, etc., are, however, definitely controversial religious subjects and do come under the ban and must not be discussed in our Lodges. Communism is not a religion but is the antithesis of religion and is essentially atheistic. A discussion of communism does not come with the restriction.

The science of government cannot be interpreted as a controversial subject. The prohibition, as I understand it, refers to a discussion of partisan politics. Communism is not a system of free government by

the people but an attempt to enslave the peoples of the world, an attempt to make the State supreme and the individual a mere pawn. It is an attempt to wipe out all institutions, including Freemasonry, that depend for their existence on the freedom of the individual. We are admonished to fulfil the duties of a good citizen and surely that admonition places responsibility on us as individual Freemasons and as an Institution.

I am convinced that Freemasonry would have nothing to fear if Communism propagated its doctrines openly. We must, however, be very fearful and wide awake to the dangers of the deceitful, insidious, under-cover methods which are adopted by it in an endeavour to enslave the free people of the world. Freemasonry and Freedom are synonymous terms. Freemasons must be prepared to unitedly fight the enemies of individual freedom. Communism is definitely such an enemy.

However, I again repeat that I am convinced that Freemasonry would have nothing to fear if communism propagated its doctrines openly. If communism openly attacked our democratic freedoms, if it openly advocated the destruction of the sanctity of our homes, the privacy of our family life, the right to worship as our conscience dictated, the freedom of private assembly such as we enjoy in our Lodges the exercise of our free franchise and our various other individual freedoms, our young people would rise in a mighty militant body as they did in World War I and II and destroy the enslaving monster. But no, the committee brain trust is too shrewd to permit a campaign of open warfare.

I am going to digress to refer to personal experience in World War I. As we gained combative experience in trench warfare we realized the necessity of establishing listening posts in "no Man's Land". The occupants of those listening posts were responsible for warning the troops in the front line of any threatened enemy raid or general attack. It was my duty to serve in the bombing squad that manned the listening post in front of the section of the line occupied by our company. We adopted the practice of having a wire running back from the listening post to a sentry on duty in the front line. We developed a set of signals, one pull on the wire meant someone was coming in from the listening post, two pulls meant we wanted someone to come out, three pulls was a request to send up flares and a series of pulls was a warning that the enemy were attacking.

I suggest that we recognize our responsibility as one of democracy's listening posts, give the alarm and send up illuminating flares. "Let there be light" and then I am satisfied that the following sneaking, under-cover approach of the communistic enemies of Freedom will be revealed in their true significance.

The advocate of communism in analyzing our democratic way of life and seeking vulnerable points undoubtedly decided that our labour organizations might be fertile soil to cultivate by highly trained agitators. We must admit that they have met with considerable success. Both Labour and Management must realize the dangers of communistic agitation. Our great labour organizations could only have been developed and can only continue to exist under a system of individual freedom, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech. Freemasonry has ever been the Champion of freedom and has always recognized "that labour is the lot of man".

Freemasonry had its origin in the grouping together of workmen and her roots originally received their nourishment from the integrity and skill of the operative builder. It is possibly the oldest labour organization in the world and must continue to be vitally interested in the welfare of the labouring men. Freemasonry as a labour organization has a background of all that is finest and worthwhile. This great and flourishing Masonic tree grew from the acorn of honest and skilled workmanship. Freemasonry was a labour organization that protected honest workmen and discredited and exposed the coward, the malingerer and the agitator. We are and must continue to be an institution of workmen - builders. Any activity that threatens our fundamental freedoms and that involves the welfare of mankind generally must be the object of Masonic concern, attention and protective action. Freemasons who are members of labour organizations should spearhead a movement to purge their institutions of the enemies of freedom. Organized labour should be actively fighting for the preservation and not the elimination of free enterprise and the democratic way of life.

Communism is also using as a method of attack on democracy the encouragement of the formation, within our own country, of nationwide groups banded together under various high-sounding two, three and four cylinder names. The names of these groups or associations are invariably camouflaged with some word or combination of words having a democratic or patriotic appeal. This is disclosed by a reference to the multifarious groups seeking public recognition in recent civic, provincial and federal elections. Many of them are the

underground tributaries to and feeders of the parent communistic stream. They strive, with considerable success, to attract our young people to membership. They make promises impossible of fulfilment, conveniently overlooking the fundamental fact that virtue, prosperity and happiness cannot be accomplished by legislation but must be personally achieved. Their doctrines would penalize the ambitious and industrious and subsidize the lazy and shiftless. Their objective is to put Democracy and free enterprise into the hands of the Receiver. They have leaders who attempt to satisfy their conscience by openly denouncing any alliance with communism but who are so drunk with a lust for power and office as to be willing to sell their souls in support of theories and doctrines that would prepare the soil for a communistic harvest. They must not be permitted to sell Canada's soul.

I suggest that this great Institution of Freemasonry teaches a way of life that would ensure world peace and happiness - but Freemasonry's teachings are diametrically opposed to communistic ideologies. Communism is challenging Freemasonry. To successfully answer the challenges we must have action and not merely a verbal criticism or the threatened dangers. We glibly suggest that the hope of tomorrow is the youth of today. If such is the case it behooves us to institute a campaign that will inspire our youth with an irresistible determination to spread the doctrine of democratic freedoms to the four corners of the globe.

The dictators recognized the value of youth, inflamed youth with their ideologies and almost succeeded in world domination. I submit that we must recognize the value of youth, must inspire our youth with the ideals and teachings of Freemasonry, must again look to youth to fight our battles, not the battles of a hot war but the battles of this cold war.

Saskatchewan Freemasonry has a positive constructive "Freemasonry and Youth Program". I appeal to Freemasonry throughout the world to give serious thought to the development of a Youth Program that will enthuse the youth of our countries with the value of the great individual freedoms and privileges existing under our democratic way of life.

There is no greater service that we as Freemasons can render our country than to maintain and strengthen the morals and morale of our youth. Youth properly directed will ensure the preservation of those liberties and freedoms which have been purchased for us by sacrifices in blood and tears down through the ages. Are we as an Institution

prepared to assist in directing the thought and actions of the youth of our communities, or are we going to adapt the attitude that it is no concern of ours and permit other organizations and institutions with sinister foreign antecedents to inoculate them with "ism" virus? On our answer as translated in prompt and constructive action depends the survival of Freemasonry.

I challenge Freemasonry to substitute actions for words, man the listening posts of freedom, give the alarm, order up flares and direct a campaign that will inspire our youth to carry the banner of individual freedom to a total victory over the enslaving forces of the 'ism' advocates. I issue this challenge in the name of Canada's 95,000 glorious dead who laid their lives on the Altar of Freedom in World Wars I and II and I do so in the words of Lt. Col. John McCrea's immortal poem"

"We are the dead. Short day ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields."

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(This is an appendix to Bro. Tate's paper as covered by motion on page 30 (page 15 in original minutes), and reproduced through courtesy of Bro. Van Dyke Parker, G.M. of Wisconsin.)

Freemasonry and Communism

By

Van Dyke Parker
Grand Master of Wisconsin

Bro. Parker:

Most Worshipful Brother Chairman, Members of the Grand Masters Conference: As we were going along this morning and I was watching

the clock and saw that it was about the time to eat, I had decided that perhaps I would be the first one on the program this afternoon, and I was thinking of a class in integral calculus that I always attended immediately following the lunch hour, and what a nice subject it was to sleep through.

Now, Brethren, I assure you that my remarks are brief, and I will try not to make them too long, for it has been said that the human mind can only absorb what the feet can understand.

Brothers, my remarks are of a serious nature and on a very vital subject.

During the closing hour of this conference in session one year ago, my immediate predecessor, Most Worshipful Schubert, then Grand Master of Masons in Wisconsin, read into the record a brief statement and proposed for adoption a resolution to be added to our Declaration of principles. This resolution was laid over for consideration at our present meeting, and before discussing the subject assigned to me in the agenda, I would like to present the brief statement made last year, along with the accompanying resolution.

Brother Schubert: Most Worshipful Sir and Brethren: We of Wisconsin would like to propose an addition to the Declaration of Principles adopted by this body, I believe, in 1939.

Before making the concrete proposal I would like to read a relatively brief statement:

Operative Masonry had the objective of advancing and protecting economic interests of stone masons.

Speculative Masonry adopted the tools of the operative art as symbols for a method of education in morality.

The modern Masonic Lodge system has refined this method of education into an elaborate ritualism, extended in the appendant bodies of both York and Scottish Rite.

Originally this method served the purpose of providing an elementary education to me who had no opportunity for formal education elsewhere (the lecture on the seven steps in the arts and sciences survives as evidence of that practice).

There is much to indicate that the early lodge practice in America placed much emphasis upon educational, cultural, moral and fraternal objectives, but in a more primitive society there was much more opportunity for practical, mutual helpfulness among Masons as an organized objective.

It is an acknowledged fact that Masonry, through Masons, had a very definite influence upon the development of the demand for America's independence and the prosecution of the War or the Revolution. Of the influence of Masonry and Masons upon the formulation of the principles of our government, there can be no doubt. In the post-revolutionary period, Masonry apparently continued its education, cultural and fraternal practices, but again directed its thinking practical objective in using its influence toward the establishment of a public school system - more particularly in the east coast States. The Texas public school system was definitely a Masonic creation. From those days on, with many isolated exceptions, of course, institutional Masonry, as distinguished from noteworthy individual Masons, remained inarticulate in public affairs, and its principal claim upon public attention rested in its varied institutional and individual works of charity.

With this brief recital, I address myself to these questions: What is the purpose of Masonry today and what is the method of that purpose?

Are we content with the making of more Masons, even though that be coupled with the educational and cultural value of the ritualistic process, with only charity as a social objective? Or are we beholden to use the working tools of Masonry for service to God and country in a larger field of thought and work?

It appears to me that one of the most important of the working tools of a Mason, though not usually classed as such, is the tiled Lodge room itself.

The example of our Masonic forebears in the part which they took in winning our independence, formulating our institutions and developing our public school system is at least suggestive of the idea that Masons may again be purposeful in this day and age.

Has this generation squandered the rich inheritance which has come to us from Revolutionary patriots, have betrayed the faith of the founding fathers?

Not until we teach the application of Masonic precepts to the affairs of life, not until we make the lodge room a forum for the discussion of Masonry to advance our temporal and spiritual well-being, will we prove ourselves worthy of our Masonic privileges and opportunity.

We have brought too many men within our fold who have no understanding of our ultimate objectives. There is not enough time in our ritualistic system to find out either what Masonry has done, or what it can do within its own self-imposed limitations. All attempts at leadership are made subservient to an all-pervading ritualism.

If the freedom-loving colonists, if the Revolutionary patriots, if the framers of the Constitution could draw inspiration from the sanctuaries of Masonry, should Masons today stand mute in their lodge room when those freedoms are being undermined and destroyed?

Can we regard ourselves as worthy of the inestimable privileges of Masonry if we stand idly by while our spiritual and material resources are being dissipated in the flagrant violation of a public trust? Shall the heresy of selfish class interest prevail to undo a homogenous freedom-loving people? Is the pagan philosophy of Karl Marx to be promulgated in America without a protest from Masons to whom God is the source of all wisdom and power?

Such subjects immediately suggest the dangers of dissension and controversy. I refuse to recognize the validity of the suggestion as it pertains to the Masonic rule forbidding controversial subjects. Granted that human stupidity may lead to a difference of opinion, even as to the wisdom and power of God, the rule would not in such a case make God a forbidden subject.

I sincerely plead with you to make the lodge room a forum for the discussion of those things which will encourage Masons to learn more about the method and purpose of Masonry applied to the affairs of life, the privileges and opportunities of fraternal intercourse with a practical objective, the duties of citizenship and well being of the social order and the virtues of obedience to God.

And in the course of any such discussion a misguided brother shall rise in the lodge room to say, "Worshipful Master; This is a controversial subject", let the Worshipful Master respond: "This being a controversial subject, it is my order that no further reference be made to it." All this in the hope that there may be increasingly less stupidity and more devotion to the accomplishment of a Masonic purpose.

Such a practice will meet the objection to the dangers of dissension and controversy. Such a Masonic forum will give life and spirit and purpose and a new interest in Masonic meetings.

There is a strong temptation to expand upon the possibilities of such a forum for Masons, but I want to direct your attention to what seems to me to be a single objective of immediate and paramount importance, not only to Masons and Masonry, but to all Americans. All that we hold dear in Masonry and all that we hold dear in our American citizenship is threatened by Communism. Both at home and abroad the evidence is piling up to show how a mere minority of Marxian enthusiasts can corrupt the political and economic thinking and the moral integrity of a whole people.

I pray to God that our membership, of over two million American Masons, may not only be awaked from their Masonic lethargy, but that they may develop something of that fervor and zeal and spirit of sacrifice for Masonry and its objectives which Communists have for their hell-bound Communism.

And so, Worshipful Sir, I propose for consideration this addition:

Masonry abhors Communism as being repugnant to its conception of the dignity of the individual personality, destructive of the basic rights which are the Divine heritage of all men and inimical to the fundamental Masonic tenet of faith in God.

With the recitation of the foregoing, I now address myself to the subject listed on the agenda. First, I would like to define Communism as we speak of it today.

During the past two centuries in this country there have been over 400 experiments in communal living. Many of these have been Christian communal colonies. No doubt in their day of founding or organization they were referred to as socialistic or communistic enterprises. Many of these have developed to a satisfactory conclusion and are now absorbed within the boundaries of these United States. These groups known to you have definitely been an influence for good, and are in no way to be confused with the subject at hand.

We are speaking of Communism as promulgated by the doctrine of Karl Marx, as furthered by Lenin and Trotzky, and now practised under the Dictatorship of Joseph Stalin in the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republic.

Secondly, let us consider what is, and what is not, controversial for discussion in a Masonic Lodge. Some may say that the discussion of any political subject should not be had within a tiled lodge room. Then, what is to be called a political subject. Are we to be confined to considering all so-called political parties, who have had their name on the ballot, as a definite political alliance and as such not open for discussion in the tiled lodge?

There is a so-called political party known as the Prohibition Party. This subject has been discussed in constituent lodges and in most grand lodges in this country. In reviewing the Foreign Correspondent Reports, we find the principle on which this party is founded is an item that is now up for discussion in most grand jurisdictions. Are we, therefore, to consider that because of the controversial nature of this subject it should not be discussed in lodge and grand lodge, or because the name has appeared on presidential ballots as a political party that the same should be called controversial and not open for discussion?

We recall the anti-Masonic Party of the early 19th century. Was this considered a political subject, a controversial subject, and not open to discussion in tiled lodge rooms by our Masonic forefathers? I dare say the answer is definitely "No". Other so-called political parties have been founded throughout the history of this nation on different ideologies and to promulgate definite reforms and views of their own. Those are not partisan, but merely sponsors for their ideas. Reading of the old records, particularly of St. John's Lodge, Boston, would indicate that our Masonic forefathers took quite an interest in the independence of the colonies, even to adjourning lodge meeting so as to participate in an event where Tea was served.

Some may say, "Why should we as leaders of Masonry in the several grand lodges of this continent concern ourselves with this subject?" Masonic leaders have mentioned to me that there are so many more serious ills in this world that we should strive to correct, that we should not concern ourselves with this so-called controversial subject.

My Brothers, there is no greater danger to the peace of this world, to the welfare of future generations, or to the security of all that we hold sacred, than the menace of Communism which is spreading its tentacles over a goodly portion of this globe.

I quote from remarks made by a past Grand Master of Wisconsin, Most Worshipful Brother George Lounsbury, at the meeting of this

conference in 1940, when at that time the subject under consideration was Free Masonry's attitude towards the then present world condition:

"Freemasonry regards as sin those things which violate the fundamental principles on which this fraternity is founded, and so in relation to world affairs, it is and must be opposed to dictatorships, intolerance of race or creed, the oppression of minorities, the armed and unprovoked aggression of strong nations upon weak ones, and the increase of power of any nation which does not follow the principles of democracy."

Those were the conditions in 1940 which led us into World War II. Where are the conditions today? Are they not parallel, if not more acute, than those we recall of 1940?

Let me make myself clear on an important point. It is not the purpose of this suggested addition to our Declaration of Principles to pave the way for an public Masonic demonstration against Communism. Such a movement would, of course, violate our own long established principle. But, if our Grand Lodge officially place this evil philosophy in the same category with atheism, where it belongs, then any possible objection to discussion of the subject will disappear, and we shall be free in our lodge rooms to enlighten our brethren and warn them against the Communistic peril of which too many are shockingly unaware or misinformed — just as we teach in our lodges a reverence for and obedience to the will of our Great Creator as opposed to the desolate theories of the atheist.

Every Mason, as a citizen, should be informed as to the deadly threat of Communism to our Fraternity, our country and the institutions which we love and under which we have built this great nation. What he learns in his Masonic Lodge he is to take with him into his daily life, guiding himself by the principles teach — the simple principles of right living and decent manhood.

Masonry in its early operative days was the forerunner of our present trade unions. In the early days of colonizing this country Masonry served as a banding together of men to assist one another in warding off the elements, the attacks of wild beasts and savages and as a communal effort to sustain life. During the days of the Revolution, Masonry was definitely an organization of patriots. We have always arisen to the call of the nation, and in these days, we must not view lightly the menace that is facing us on all sides.

The discussion of the so-called political parties is not a controversial subject. It is partisan politics that is forbidden. A man may be a Mason and a member of any political party of his choosing, a man may be a Mason and worship his God in any church he desires, be he Hebrew, Roman Catholic, or Protestant; but no man may be a Mason and a Communist, for a Communist is an avowed atheist, a follower of the teachings of Dr. Karl Marx, who expressed himself that religion was the opiate of the masses. You cannot be a Communist and a Mason any more than you can be a George Washington and a Benedict Arnold.

Communism is not only incompatible with the tenets of Masonry, but the Masonic Lodge system, along with the church, must cease to exist where Communism governs. Russia today tolerates a restricted church only as a temporary expedient, and is looking to the ultimate extermination of all forms of worship of Deity. Masons cannot dismiss the subject for it is not controversial in the Masonic sense. The first law of nature is that of self preservation, and the first duty of Masonry is to defend Masonry. To do that Masons must be able to recognize the danger of Communism, both in its outward and in its concealed form.

Communism will never prosper in America if its purpose and its methods are known and understood. Ignorance of the subject has produced a corresponding apathy toward any need for combating communistic activity.

The casual observer commends the proposal of Communism, "That all men shall share more equally in the world's goods", little realizing that that proposal is only a cover for a fraud to secure political power with a promise of preferment to its most aggressive supporters.

Communists do not come out in the open. They conceal themselves behind false fronts and use their unsuspecting stool pigeons for an appearance of public decency and high ideals. They plan secretly to control key positions of power and influence. They individually deny their own identity. There is no form of dishonesty or treachery which they have not employed with the approval of their highest leaders. They justify lawlessness and immorality as a means to an end. They thrive on social disorder, human misery and ignorance. They deliberately appeal to the lowest forms of human selfishness and greed. They propagate hatred. The class struggle is their openly avowed objective. By their own formal declaration Communism can be achieved only by overturning the whole social order. They mean to accomplish their ends by revolution, bloody revolution.

Our whole political economy, our age old institutions, our traditions and customs, our conception of law and order, our religion and morals, our family life must all go if Communism is to prevail in America. All this is to come about on the promise, impossible of fulfillment, that Communism is a panacea for all moral and economic human ills.

If there be any doubt upon any of the foregoing assertions, the proof is adequate, documented largely by communistic official manifestoes and declarations, their own records, their miscellaneous publications and the unashamed assertions of Communists themselves.

There are evidences today of a revival of German militarism under Soviet patronage, and an open feeling among all men that an historical duel is now being waged between Soviet Totalitarianism and Western Democracy. This problem will be solved by overall measures, but let us be sure we do not lose the duel by default.

A citizen of the Soviet Socialist Republic may not own land, may not strike, may not picket, may not travel, may not own jewelry, may not be tried by jury, may not choose his job, may not absent himself from work, may not ring a church bell, may not be a friend of a foreigner, is forbidden freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of soul.

Contrast this with our beloved country where the dignity of the individual is safeguarded and preserved. His home is his castle and may not be invaded without due process of law. His personal effects are protected from unwarranted search and seizure. He may not be arrested unless he is engaged in actual commission of crime, or is presented with the charge for which he stands accused, and in either case, he must be arraigned in open court, be represented by counsel of his own choosing, and admitted to bail. He must be given ample time in which to prepare his defense and must be tried by a jury of his peers. If dissatisfied with the outcome, he has the right of appeal.

Furthermore, free and unmolested he may worship at an altar of his own selection, his devotions uninterrupted and his faith a matter solely for his conscience and his God. If he disagrees with his government, and he frequently does, he has the right to express his opinion freely and openly, and if he so wills and can afford it, he may fire a hall and invite others to hear him.

As Masons our course is clear. Our first duty is to God and our next duty is to our fellow men. Our duty to God rises in a perpendicular,

which we meet our brethren upon the level and these two form the square. Communism and Masonry are at opposite poles and cannot live side by side.

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of the Officers of the
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