

The Brethern – A Wink, a Nod, or a Shake of the Hand

by Stuart Christie

THE POINT OF A CLUB IS NOT WHO IT LETS IN, BUT WHO IT KEEPS OUT. THE CLUB IS BASED ON TWO ANCIENT BRITISH IDEAS: THE SEGREGATION OF CLASSES, AND THE SEGREGATION OF SEXES; AND THEY EVEN REMAIN INSISTENT ON KEEPING PEOPLE OUT, LONG AFTER THEY HAVE STOPPED WANTING TO COME IN.

ANTHONY SAMPSON
'ANATOMY OF BRITAIN'

IF SECRECY IS TO BE CONSIDERED a factor in British politics and commerce then without doubt Freemasonry is one of its principal vehicles. Freemasonry is the largest semi-covert organisation of the western bourgeoisie, with over six million members worldwide sharing a vision of a unified world order bound together through a series of interlocking Masonic alliances. Among the world's most influential institutions is the United Grand Lodge of England, the mother lodge of Craft Freemasonry, with its headquarters at Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street near Covent Garden. It is here that the wealthy and influential members of the British Establishment meet in conditions of ritual secrecy, ostensibly to listen to lectures on Masonic history and to discuss charitable and other Masonic business. In practice, the Masonic brotherhood constitutes a clandestine network for the defence of the status quo and established privilege, in other words — a mutual-aid society for the British ruling class.

Of course just as a mutual-aid society for gaolers will be different in aims and functions from a mutual-aid society for prisoners (one providing clubs and the other hacksaws), so the mutual-aid society of society's privileged power elite will be different



Officers of the Grand Lodge of England meeting and greeting outside Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, Covent Garden

from the mutual-aid societies which provide assistance among those whose deprivation of the good things in life is the essential condition for the preservation of the privileges of the few.

Since the benefits of privilege, preferment and patronage, as opposed to their outward trappings, are necessarily largely hidden, so the efforts, the necessarily combined efforts, of those who would defend their privilege are also hidden; that is to say, they are more than discreet, being secret and even conspiratorial. As US historian Carl Oglesby observes in his book *The Yankee and Cowboy War*:

Clandestinism is not the usage of a handful of rogues, it is a formalised practice of an entire class in which a thousand hands spontaneously join. Conspiracy is the normal continuation of normal politics by normal means.

Freemasonry is one of principal structures that allow the joining of the hands to be a little more than wholly spontaneous.

Few aspects of contemporary life — political, judicial, military, commercial, administrative or law enforcement are untouched by the corrupting hand of Freemasonry. Also, rarely does the press speak, other than in veiled terms, of the role of Freemasons in business and politics, even though their presence is often a key to decoding affairs. Indeed, on occasion the media itself is implicated in specific scandals involving disinformation spread by a masonic network at the heart of the judiciary, magistracy and the press — the Poulson Affair, the Birmingham Six case and the Stalker Inquiry, to name but a few. In addition, the closed-shop environment which is created wherever the Brotherhood establishes a foothold is a constant source of acrimony and division in both public and private sectors.

How many people's careers have been routinely blighted by the curse of Masonic patronage and preferment, with particular jobs and positions reserved for a 'Brother'?

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

FREEMASONRY IS A PARTICULARLY British creation which first emerged with the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 and spread throughout Europe from 1721 onwards. Essentially, it consists of three degrees or grades: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft Mason and Master Mason. The central theme of all Masonic ritual is the building of Solomon's temple and the soap opera incidents involved in its construction, such as the murder of the principal architect Hiram Abiff and the continuing search for the secret of the lost Keystone. The sinister daftness of it all illustrates the essential madness and badness of power elites as well as providing a diversionary spectacle for the curious outsider.

In addition to the three Craft degrees of Freemasonry, which are open to all males who profess a belief in an Almighty Being including Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Roman Catholics⁽¹⁾, etc. there are additional side or Higher degrees such as the Knights Templar (no relation to the original ecclesiastical Middle East Task Force) and the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite 33° who, despite the word Scottish, are exclusively White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. These side-degrees are higher only in the numerical sense, ostensibly, as the Grand Lodge of England practises Freemasonry only within the three Craft degrees and does not officially admit the existence of any superior Masonic authority. The side-degrees are conferred by patronage only on a specially approved and strictly limited number of candidates totalling at most a few hundred brothers, all drawn

exclusively from the intimate friendship circles of the British ruling class.

The top three degrees of 33° Freemasonry are themselves conferred only after a unanimous vote of approval by the Supreme Council 33 of the Ancient and Accepted Rite of Freemasonry, which itself is recruited, incestuously, from among the Grand Officers or Past Grand Officers of the Grand Lodge of England. These are the pre-eminent Grand Inspectors General, whose numbers are limited to 75. The headquarters of this inner Masonic organisation is the Grand Temple of the Rose Croix (no connection with the Rosicrucians) at 10 Duke Street, St James's.

When I first began researching freemasonry in the early 1980s it was interesting to note the strong military presence among the exclusively WASP 33°: Major-General Sir Ralph Hone, KCMG, Major General Sir Allen Adair, GCVO, Brigadier Alex Cosby Fishburn Jackson, ex-ADC to the Queen.

CAPTAINS AND KINGS

THE PRINCIPAL FIGURE IN ENGLISH Freemasonry is the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, who is invariably selected from the Royal Family and/or the English aristocracy. The present incumbent is H.R.H. Edward Duke of Kent. Once installed, the Grand Master then appoints the officers of the Grand Lodge himself: there is no pretence at democracy, which would, after all, be out of place among so many aristocrats, captains of industry and masters of our fate.

Masonic officials are highly paid. No details are available concerning the salaries paid to the thirty-five full-time employees of the Grand Lodge, but they must at least be commensurate with the (in 1983) 20 million lire (approx. £10,000) plus lavish expenses paid for the part-time services of the Grand Master of the Italian counterpart, the Grand Orient of Italy,

Signor Armando Corona. Additionally, Grand Lodge officials have wide-ranging powers of patronage accorded to them by the Constitution.

The most powerful position of all is that of Grand Secretary who is appointed by the Grand Master himself and who remains in office until retirement.

Apart from the three degrees of Craft Masonry and the confusing number of side-degrees there is a complex and labyrinthine pecking order of rank and precedence among the officers of the exclusive Grand Lodge, which covers over seventy grades of current and past office-holders.

There is little publicly available information on the structure, membership or workings of the Grand Lodge, which actively discourages any attempt at investigation beyond the now slick PR veneer.

Back in the 1980s, I spoke to the then Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England, Commander Michael Higham RN who refused to be interviewed or comment on any of the questions I put to him. Things have changed radically in attitudes to Freemasonry since then.

It was the negative publicity surrounding Freemasonry following the publication of Michael Knight's *The Brotherhood* in 1984 that first forced the United Grand Lodge of England to go in for serious damage control by publishing a leaflet on the positive aspects of the 'Craft'.

The next PR blow Freemasonry received — the worst since the Bradford City Council and Poulson corruption scandal in 1970 — occurred in April 1988 when two Asian businessmen from Leicester, Sidney and Shaun Callis, accidentally gate-crashed a boxing function of the Victory Masonic Lodge in Blackburn. The Leicester men were beaten up and then prosecuted on trumped-up charges of 'assaulting' eight policemen, but were acquitted — presumably by a non-masonic jury.

1. Solemn excommunication for baptised believers who become Freemasons is no longer automatic according to the recently published Codex of Canon Law in the Roman Catholic Church. There is also a document from the Congregation for Doctrine and the Faith which, together with a series of official and semi-official pronouncements, has more or less cemented the peace between the Vatican and Freemasonry.

Lancashire police (ie, the tax-payers) eventually paid out £170,000 to the two men in an out-of-court settlement. What made the scandal more chilling was the extent of the Masonic cover-up, which involved not only the policemen, but also the hotel manager, the accused's solicitor and a senior official in the Crown Prosecution Service who were all involved in attempting to secure the convictions of the Callises for attacking their police assailants

Four years later, in 1992, as evidence about Masonic involvement in the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad (disbanded in 1989 for corruption) began to emerge — partly as a result of the investigation into the wrongful conviction of the Birmingham Six, and the West Midlands forces's involvement in smearing John Stalker, the Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester who had been investigating the RUC's 'Shoot to Kill' policy — the Masonic PR machine swung into action again. This time with the media (including Masonic journalists) being invited to attend a Masonic meeting for the first time.

February 1998 saw the first showdown between parliament and the Grand Lodge since 1951. In April 1951, Fred Longden, a Labour MP, called for a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Freemasonry. Home Secretary Herbert Morrison rejected the matter out of hand and the subject was not raised again until 1998.

In February 1998 the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee chaired by Chris Mullin MP summoned Grand Lodge Officers to provide the names of senior judges and police officers who were Freemasons.

Among other matters, the Committee was investigating the activities of the West Midlands Crime Squad, 96 of whom were alleged to have been Freemasons. The Committee had statements from police officers that the Freemasons within the squad had been operating

with impunity as a 'firm within a firm'. One of their favoured practices was apparently holding a plastic bag over a suspect's head until they agreed to sign a confession.

Having assured the Committee that that he would release the names on a strictly confidential basis, the contemptuous Grand Secretary Michael Higham then reneged on his promise and accused the MPs of conducting a 'fishing expedition'.

The Grand Secretary changed his mind after being warned that unless he provided the names he would be charged with contempt of parliament.

Highams retired three months later and his successor, Jim Daniel, who took over on 1 June 1998, turned out to be considerably more media-savvy. Grand Lodge now operates a hi-tech media-friendly and PR spin-machine from its headquarters at 60 Great Queen Street, London WC2, and a sophisticated but not particularly informative website at www.grandlodge-england.org.

JOINING THE BRETHREN

TO BECOME A FREEMASON IS NOT difficult. The requirements for a prospective candidate are that he must be male, twenty-one, and in reputable circumstances; he must profess a belief in a God and be prepared to take an oath on a book of Sacred Law under no less a penalty than ritual murder, mutilation and being 'disappeared' just like a victim of a Latin American death squad or a CIA 'extraordinary rendition' team.

The would-be initiate is also forbidden to countenance any act which may subvert the peace and good order of society, must pay due obedience to the law of the state and must never be remiss in the allegiance due to the sovereign of his native land. To the above list might be added a predilection for dressing up and performing dramatic ritual. The members of the Lodge to which initiation is sought are balloted as to the candidates' acceptability to their

company, and membership is refused if three black balls are cast against him in the voting.

The vast majority of the 350,000 or so Craft Freemasons who come under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England are obliged by the limitations of their friendship circles and income to remain at the level of the Third Degree, that of Master Mason. The Higher degrees and officership of the Grand Lodge are the prerogative of the rich and powerful and not for the likes of working-class brothers from Hackney, Hastings or St Leonards.

The following advice given by the *Masonic Record* in June 1964, although couched in suitably diplomatic language, reminded the Freemason of proletarian origin to remember his place:

He [the brother] must consider how much time he can devote to Freemasonry without detriment to family, business and his other commitments. The more he progresses in Freemasonry the greater will be the demands on his pocket and he must decide whether he can meet these extra financial obligations.

For those with time, money, friends and influence the Masonic world is their oyster and they can join as many lodges as they can afford and will have them. Nor are the restrictions imposed by the credit-rating of the less-privileged brethren the only drawbacks to Masonic advancement.

Aspiring, upwardly-mobile Freemasons who join with an eye to discussing the price of beer with the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke of Kent, Lord Cornwallis and other distinguished members of the Craft are in for a disappointment: there are lodges and lodges and, like Orwells animals, some brethren are more equal than others.

As with the now notorious secret or 'covered' lodges P1 and P2 in Italy, the latter of which had a coded membership of 2,400 brothers although only 953 names were

disclosed ⁽²⁾ there are a number of the 1612 lodges in London and the 5,865 provincial lodges (in 47 Masonic Provinces) whose purpose is to bring together into single discreet bodies brothers who hold high public or private office and who wish to remain at a suitable distance from the hoi polloi of Freemasonry.

Thus, there are lodges whose members are recruited exclusively and selectively from among the ranks of particular power elites: Mayors and Lord Mayors of London, the Bank of England, chartered accountants, architects, the legal profession, the merchant navy, the armed services, the Metropolitan Police, broadcasting. There is even a Council of Public School Lodges.

Success and promotion in any of the professions is eased by membership of the Craft. The Royal College of Surgeons and Royal College of Physicians, for example, appear to be an exclusively Masonic preserve. In his book *The Doctors* (Gollancz, 1965), Paul Ferris quotes a senior physician as saying 'No one would become surgeon to the Queen unless he was a Freemason.' This tradition dates back at least as far as Queen Victoria when, under the patronage of the Prince of Wales, who was Grand Master of England from 1875 until his accession to the throne in 1901, when he assumed the title Protector of the Craft, the British Establishment consolidated its hold on Freemasonry.

The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) successfully used Freemasonry as a parallel policy-making and action body to influence the affairs of state from which he had been excluded by his mother (herself, of course,

ineligible for membership, as a woman).

Freemasonry is particularly strong within the armed services, where it is seen as an extension of the fellowship of the regiment. There are 42 lodges in the British cavalry regiments alone, 25 in the Royal Regiment of Artillery and a number of Royal Marine lodges. The exclusive elite of the British Army, the 22nd SAS and Artists Rifles (21st SAS), have a Lodge (Byfield) which meets on the second Monday of every month at the Duke of Yorks HQ in Chelsea. The Navy have their own exclusive lodges such as Royal Navy Lodge 2612, whose members include such worthies as the Duke of Edinburgh and former Grand Secretary, Commander Michael Higham RN.

Hopeful squaddies and matelots looking for rapid advancement or simply good Masonic friendship should know, however, that since 1815 naval and military lodges have introduced by-laws excluding all civilians and stating that no sailor below the rank of Petty Officer or no soldier below the rank of Sergeant is eligible for initiation into the Brotherhood. Masonic researcher John Dewar, author of the authoritative study of contemporary Freemasonry, *The Unlocked Secret*, was told by a spokesman for a large Masonic outfitter in Great Queen Street that much of the firm's successful business rested on export orders for regalia from NATO troops in Europe, an indication as to the extent of Masonic strength among the officer corps of the British and other NATO armed services.

BLOODY OATH!

LESS BLOODTHIRSTY OATHS THAN Masonic ones, but instead administered by trade unionists in the early part of the nineteenth century, were punished severely, as in the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Here are some Masonic examples:

I, in the presence of the Great

Architect of the Universe, and of this worthy, worshipful, and warranted Lodge, sincerely and solemnly promise and swear, that I will always help conceal and never reveal any part or parts, point or points of the secrets or mysteries of or belonging to Free and Accepted Masons in Masonry, under no less a penalty, on the violation of any of them, than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the root, and buried at a cables length from the shore, where the tide regularly ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, So help me, God, and keep me steadfast in this my Great and Solemn Obligation of an Entered Apprentice Freemason. (The candidate then seals his oath by kissing the volume of Sacred Law.)

— Oath of Obligation administered during the Ceremony of Initiation

I, in the presence of the Grand Geometrician, under no less a penalty, than that of having my left breast laid open, my heart torn therefrom, and given to the ravenous birds of the air, or devouring beasts of the field as prey. So help me Almighty God.

— Oath of Obligation, Second Degree

I, in the presence of the Most High, solemnly promise and swear, under no less a penalty, than that of being severed in two, my bowels burned to ashes and those ashes scattered over the face of the earth and wafted by the four cardinal winds of heaven.

— Oath of Obligation, Third Degree

I, in the presence of the True and Living God, solemnly promise, under no less a penalty, than that of having my head struck off.

— Oath of Obligation, Holy Royal Arch Chapter ⁽³⁾

And here are some of the laws which might have applied:

Every person, who shall in any manner or form whatsoever administer or cause to be administered, or be

3. The rules were changed in 1986. Would-be freemasons no longer have to agree to disembowelment, have their tongues cut out, or their ashes wafted by the winds of heaven. The oath remains valid for Freemasons who entered the Craft prior to that date.

2. During the investigation into Michele Sindona's Banca Privata Italiana, a conduit for Mafia, fascist and Italian secret service money, police discovered a list of 953 members of Lodge P2, which included three cabinet ministers, 30 generals, eight admirals, the head of the armed forces, the heads of two intelligence services as well as the senior civilian collator of intelligence, 43 MPs, and police chiefs of Italy's four main cities.

assisting at the administering of any oath or engagement, purporting or intending to bind the person taking the same to commit any treason or murder, shall, on conviction thereof by due course of law, be adjudged guilty of felony.

— Unlawful Oaths Act 1812

All persons who shall conspire, confederate and agree to murder any person, whether he be a subject of Her Majesty or not, and whether he be within the Queens dominions or not, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and shall be liable to imprisonment for any term not more than ten years.

— Offences Against the Person Act 1861

IN FACT, FREEMASONRY, BEING AN arm of the Establishment, has been able to circumvent or ignore the law of the land relating to secret societies and conspiracy for two hundred years now. Masonic lodges were specifically exempted from the *Unlawful Societies Act 1799* by the intervention of the Fourth Duke of Atholl and the Earl of Moira. They were equally able to ignore other repressive statutes and legislation directed against the nascent working-class and radical organisations: the *Seditious Meetings Act 1817* and the *Promissory Oaths Act 1868* which specifically provided that any society requiring members to take an oath when they join shall substitute a declaration for an oath.

Every Masonic lodge is required, however, to submit an annual return of the names, addresses and occupations of its subscribing members to the Clerk of the Peace for the county in which the lodge is held. This information is not available to the general public nor is it, apparently, collated by central government. The fact that most Clerks of the Peace are likely to be Freemasons themselves will help ensure the information remains among friends.

A CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY?

ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE LAWS relating to the taking of oaths

were cleared from the Statute Books with the *Criminal Law Act 1967* the Masonic oaths even though they have for the most part, since 1964, been abbreviated for the benefit of the squeamish to the euphemistic “ever bearing in mind the ancient penalty” are clearly in contravention of the conspiracy laws so beloved of the English judiciary for use against the organised working class.

The prime justification for the use of the conspiracy laws is that it enables the law to intervene at an early stage before a contemplated crime has actually been committed. Lord Diplock defined conspiracy thus: *[T]he offence lies not in the overt acts themselves, but in an inferred anterior agreement to commit them, There can be little doubt that a sacred promise to countenance and agree to premeditated ritual mutilation and murder falls within the category of an agreement to commit a crime.*

In his summing up in the conspiracy trial of the Shrewsbury Three in 1974, Mr Justice Mais directed the jury to consider the following:

...conspirators do not publish their agreement or design. The whole object of conspiracy is something secret, and so it is necessary to see whether the surrounding circumstances and facts as found by you are such that you can infer a conspiracy and that an accused was part of that conspiracy. I must tell you that conspiracy, generally speaking, is a matter of inference. It is seldom expressed in words still less in writing, and it can be inferred from conduct, by the words and actions of those concerned, Now it is not necessary that all conspirators, or the accused here, should join the conspiracy at one and the same time. It is not necessary that they should all join at the beginning, or that they all originated the idea. They neednt all know the smallest detail but there must be knowledge of the general scheme, a man, as I say, who joins a conspiracy after its formation, who lends his aid to it knowingly, in furtherance of its objects, is just as guilty as the man who

was there at the beginning. He can even join during the implementation of the conspiracy.

Also, the permeation of the entire legal profession by Freemasonry from the Lord Chancellor’s Office to the most far-flung provincial lawyer and JP or Sheriff the conspiracy makers and arbiters themselves will no doubt ensure that Freemasonry remains a locked secret.

One consequence of the 1998 Select Committee’s report was a survey of the English and Welsh courts, which drew a response from 96 per cent of judges and 87 per cent of magistrates. Five per cent of judges and magistrates admitted they were Freemasons while 89 per cent of judges and 80 per cent of magistrates said they had no links with the organisation. After months of standoff between parliament, Grand Lodge and among Ministers themselves, a register of Masonic judges was introduced. It was the first such register to cover any group of civil servants or other state employees; it also made the declaration of Masonic status compulsory for all newly-appointed judges. Needless to say, those Freemasons, lawyers and judges who subsequently cried ‘discrimination’ or defended freemasonry in the judiciary on the grounds that privacy must be protected against unjustifiable interference — all conveniently ignore the conflict of interest which Freemasonry imposes on its members. In other words, although so far only five per cent of over 5,000 judges have admitted they are Freemasons (64 declined to answer); this translates into no less than 247 judges who are known to have taken an oath demanding a higher degree of observance than their own judicial oath i.e. to support their brother Freemasons to the detriment of others.

In November 1998 a Welsh barrister wrote to *The Times*:

After 30 years at the Bar, it is my view that the influence of Freemasonry in the law is insidious and overwhelming. By

contrast my own 'religious beliefs, political views or sexual preferences' are manifest for all to see. The liberty of the ordinary individual is too important to be left to a judiciary with secrets to hide.

WHO'S WHO?

IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS OF STATE AND business there is little doubt that Freemasonry provides a serious instrument of influence for the relatively small number of people who wield real political and economic power in Britain today: cabinet ministers, senior civil servants, senior police officers and leading members of the armed services, executives of local authorities, judges, magistrates, journalists, prominent churchmen, industrialists and trade union leaders.

It is not only in national affairs that Freemasons can exert their influence. The extent to which Freemasonry can exert a powerful grip on the life of a community has been illustrated by the investigations carried out in the 1970s by local radical papers such as *Rebecca* and *Tameside Eye*. Journalists from both papers obtained membership lists for Masonic Lodges in their respective areas. The investigation into the Abergavenny Freemasons showed just how ubiquitous and pervasive Freemasonry can be within the power structure of local politics, commerce and privilege.

Abergavenny is a quiet market town with a population of about 10,000 and one Masonic lodge with about 170 members. At the time of the investigation in the late 1970s many of the Tories on the Conservative-controlled, 16-seat council were Freemasons, including solicitors and the managers of the three High Street Banks, the Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk, the Borough Treasurer, the Housing Manager, the Clerk to the Magistrates, the owners of the *Abergavenny Chronicle*, the Master of the Talybont Hunt, the head of the Abergavenny police force, three sergeants and a detective constable, 17 shopkeepers and 16 local

businessmen. If Abergavenny could be said to have an Establishment it was to be found at the monthly meetings of the local St Johns Lodge. The *Tameside Eye* investigation into the sixty lodges in the Greater Manchester area showed a similar picture of a cohesive and all-pervasive network underpinning vested interest and privilege.

It would be interesting to see what a similar investigation into Hastings Thornton Lodge 5556 threw up.

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

FREEMASONRY CLAIMS FOR ITSELF the status of a private, exclusively male club whose members are dedicated to the ideals of universal brotherhood and morality which finds its principal expression in its charitable works. But in the UK, as opposed to Craft Freemasonry in the US, the main benefactors of Masonic charities are: the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institute (which owns a block of a hundred flats at Harewood Court, Hove), the Royal Masonic Institute for Girls, the RMI for Boys and the Royal Masonic Hospital. The Queen is patron of all with the exception of the hospital.

Because they were seen as primarily self-serving institutions — falling more into the category of Friendly Societies — in the late 1970s the Masonic charities faced the possibility of losing their registered Charity status. And so, following the recommendations of the Bagnall Report in 1978, the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) Board of Benevolence became in 1981, the independent Grand Charity, with its own President, Council and Committee.

Commander Higham, the then Grand Secretary, authorised the transfer that year of the assets of the Fund of Benevolence which at the time stood at £2,496,961 to the newly registered Grand Charity, the only registered Masonic charity which does not mention a specific purpose in its

articles of association (e.g. for relief of distressed dependants of Freemasons). In fact the stated aims of the Grand Charity are sufficiently vague as to cast serious doubt as to its claims to be a charity. The monies at its disposal can now be distributed to: such charitable institutions, objects or purposes as the council shall have at its absolute discretion determine. The assets of the Grand Charity at the end of 1981 stood at £2,638,447 while its income for the year was £834,589, including over £500,000 in contributions from the Craft and £250,000 in dividends and interest from stocks and bonds (Distillers, Imperial Group, Marks and Spencers, Rank Hovis McDougall, etc.).

For the year ended 30 November 2004, total income was £7.02m with income from lodges standing at £1.86m. The Grand Charity also received a total of £965,400 from legacies and donations., the balance being provided from investment income. Expenditure for the year 2003-2004 was £5.7m of which £2.742m went to Masonic charities and individual Freemasons and £2.31m to charities in the wider community.

In November 2005 it was discovered that the Midlands-based Leamington Fund chaired by Michael Price, the provincial grandmaster of Warwickshire freemasons responsible for 200 lodges and about 6,500 masons, made a donation of £93,000 to the Conservative party. No public records exist for the Leamington Fund, which is an 'unincorporated association' and, as such, can make donations without revealing who is behind them.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

FOR MANY YEARS THE GRAND Lodge of England disavowed the European Grand Orient Lodge because of their alleged permeation by freethinkers and revolutionaries. It may not be entirely coincidental that the Grand Lodge of England finally

recognised the Grand Orient of Italy in 1972 at the height of extreme right-wing machinations in both the UK and Italy (in Italy these being most closely linked with the Italian Grand Lodge and the secret lodges P1 and P2), thus bringing Italy back into full membership of the international Masonic community after 110 years in the wilderness.

The principal architect of this historic rapprochement was the then Grand Master of the Grand Orient, Lino Salvini, an extreme right winger, a neo-fascist in fact, who immediately set about involving the Masonic movement in a series of financial and political intrigues which included moves to sabotage the proposed amalgamation of the three main Italian trade unions. These manoeuvres had the financial backing of Fiat and the Italian employers' federation, which donate in the region of 100 million lire a year to Masonic coffers.

It is equally interesting that within 24 hours of the discovery of the hanged body of Roberto Calvi on 17 June 1982 — a death which occurred in an almost ritualistic setting under the arches of Blackfriars Bridge with the tidal waters of the River Thames lapping at his feet (P2 members were known as the Black Brothers) — the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, Armando Corona, made a hurried trip to London accompanied by his Grand Secretary, De Stefano, to discuss Calvi's death with officials of the Grand Lodge in England.

Calvi's escape to England had been organised by fellow P2 member and neo-fascist financier Flavio Carboni, and the man who safehoused Calvi in London was a London-based Freemason by the name of Michael Morris. Carboni is currently (October 2005) being tried in Rome, with three others, for Calvi's murder.

WHOSE CONSPIRACY?

As long as you know what the agreement is, then you are a conspirator. You

needn't necessarily know your fellow conspirators, nor need you always be active in the conspiracy. All you need to know is the agreement. It can be effected by a wink or a nod, without a word being exchanged. It need have no particular time limit, no particular form, no boundaries." — Mr Justice James (later Lord James) summing up in the 1971 trial 'Regina v Greenfield'.

FREEMASONRY IS NOT A CONSPIRACY in itself, nor is it the repository of any hidden secret or arcane knowledge. Neither is Freemasonry attractive to fascists of the old or new variety, who view it with hostility, seeing in it the hidden hand of Bolshevik subversion and a tool of 'international finance capital' (a coded reference to the Jewish world conspiracy which they profess to see all around them). Politically speaking, Freemasonry is a vehicle for the extremists of the centre.

For the majority of Freemasons the Craft permits them to get away from their wives on a regular basis and rationalise it to themselves and others in a good and worthy cause. The Minister at London's City Temple, the Reverend Leonard Griffith, explained his misogyny to Masonic researcher James Dewar:

I think there is a man's world and I think every man needs to get into that world occasionally and Masonry is perhaps one expression of this. Certainly, in the Churches I've always been depressed by the fact that there seems to be a much larger proportion of women than men. I like to be with men and perhaps that's one reason why I enjoy attending a meeting of the Masonic Lodge.

CONCLUSIONS

WHAT INFERENCE CAN WE DRAW concerning the covert power and influence which Freemasonry may exercise among its members? There are, after all, many secret, semi-secret and exclusive societies and clubs either contending for power or

warding off attempts by outsiders to undermine their own position in the great pecking order.

Success in an authoritarian and competitive society as in totalitarian societies depends on knowing more about the opposition and their plans, together with the ability to monopolise that information and use it intelligently. 'Conspiracy', as Carl Oglesby affirms, 'is standard practice among all power groups, occult or otherwise. What they fail to recognise is that ultimately secrets are more dangerous to those who hoard them than to those excluded from the information cycle.'

Freemasonry is all things to men. Freemasons argue that the Craft consists of enlightened and disinterested persons who cherish humanitarian and charitable goals and who combine co-operatively to realise mutual aspirations. In reality Freemasonry cannot but provide a conduit for the bribery, corruption and subornation that are endemic in any system of privilege. The secrecy and exclusiveness of the Craft creates an unbridgeable gap between the Masonic view of the world and those outside the brotherhood, who, in effect, do not exist for Freemasons, except inasmuch as they aid or hinder their political or career ambitions. Count Windischgratz, an astute observer of human nature and the activities of secret societies, wrote in 1788:

[T]hey are likely to encourage habits of mind and behaviour destructive of attention to the ordinary moral and social duties. The danger of degeneration from the high ideals of a secret brotherhood will always be present because of the difficulties of reconciling the secret obligations to the society with the outside world. Claims to use the opportunities of secret organisations for the preparation of the regeneration of the world are always to be regarded as dubious, given men's ordinary weaknesses.

THE CLAIM BY FREEMASONS THAT THE Craft provides brotherhood is equally fictitious. The exclusiveness of the inner circles of the Higher degrees and the hierarchical structure of the Grand Lodge itself based on rank, patronage, preferment, precedence and wealth have more in common with the Mafia and the Union Corse than with a universal brotherhood.

Although Freemasons do constitute a powerful pressure group because of their positions in society it would of course be very wrong and misleading to see them as some sort of omnipotent cabal controlling the course of human affairs.

Freemasons, like the Roman Catholic Catenian Association, MI5, the CIA, the Russian FSU, Opus Dei, the editorial board of *The Economist* or any other exclusive group, have as much idea as anyone else as to what is going on in the world. What Freemasonry can provide is an organised and efficient sociometric network capable of defending and extending the influence of those who already wield power.

The problem with finding evidence of criminal manipulation of the Craft by Freemasons — as within any cohesive and tenacious combination or friendship circle — is like fumbling for something solid in a sea of tapioca pudding. Also, most conspiracy theories are invariably so loosely defined that all evidence which does not tie in with the thesis is usually dismissed as part of the cover-up, but the law is quite specific.

In his summing up in the Shrewsbury Three conspiracy trial in 1974, Mr Justice Mais told the jury: *[A conspiracy] is seldom expressed in words, still less in writing, and it can be inferred from the conduct, by the words and by the acts of those concerned...*

The one solid conclusion we can reach is that Freemasons do constitute an important political, social and business pressure group and have the potential, at least, to exert a powerful

influence at national and international as well as local level. The entire problem with Freemasonry is that it is an unaccountable means of influence — but not the *only* one!

The relationship between the members of the Establishment is symbiotic and mutually supportive, and the Craft — at least up until the late 1990s when its membership started to fall — provided a parallel power structure linking financial, administrative, judicial, military and other power elites whose vision of a healthy world order depends on strong Masonic alliances among right-thinking men. Unlike the past, people



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who seek power and influence in Blair's Britain no longer turn to the lodges, they turn to the Labour Party instead.

For those who believe in an open and accountable society it is important to be able to identify the power-wielders and backroom policymakers in our local communities. Mason-spotting is one such way of going about this. Lodge meetings and Masonic functions are usually advertised in the local papers, while the more important events in the Masonic calendar are covered regularly in the newspapers such as *Daily Telegraph*. Freemasons themselves can be easily identified

going to and from the Masonic Hall, restaurant, hotel or pub where the lodge or function is being held by their dark suits and small cases in which they carry their regalia and jewels. Apart from the regular lodge meetings, Freemasons also celebrate certain saints' days and attend special lodge functions on or close to those days: St John the Evangelist, 27 December (1st Sunday after Christmas); St George's Day, 23 April (1st Wednesday after); St John the Baptist, 24 June. St Barbara, St Thomas and the Four Crowned Martyrs are among other saints with particular significance to members of the Craft.

The photographer working with the Welsh investigative magazine *Rebecca* showed great initiative when she managed to smuggle herself into the annual meeting of the South Wales Provinces Eastern Division Grand Lodge while it was in full session and take photographs. She was grabbed by the Lodge Tyler a Masonic bouncer whose function is to guard the lodge while in session (historically the role of the Tyler included organising and carrying out the ritual murder of Masonic traitors and apostates) but she managed to throw the camera to a waiting colleague and save the film.

As there is no publicly available register of the membership of this particular secret society and it is unlikely the Clerks of the Peace will agree to make their lists available for inspection, then only actions such as the above are likely to identify the membership of one of the central pillars of privilege in clandestine Britain. Only by opening their books to inspection will the many 'misconceptions' surrounding freemasonry be cleared up and remove the suspicion of a devotion to advancing members' interests in secret — unless, of course, that is the whole point in the first place.

Stuart Christie

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