

# **An introduction to Buffaloism as practised by the R.A.O.B.**

**By David Hardy**

There are a number of sections or "banners" of the R.A.O.B., and while they differ in numerical strength and procedures, all have the same purpose, often freely and aptly described as "the pursuit of Brotherhood".

Our conception of Brotherhood is firmly based on the family principle, that the total power and strength of the family shall be available to the individual in accordance with his need, but the point must be made at once, that the degree to which needs can be met depends entirely on the loyalty to that principle of each member of the family, YOU and I.

Administratively we are a three-tier organisation. Minor Lodge, Provincial Grand Lodge and Grand Lodge and there are four degrees or rank of membership. 1<sup>st</sup> (Brother), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Primo), 3<sup>rd</sup> (Knight of Merit) and 4<sup>th</sup> (Right Honourable).

As any attempt to give a detailed explanation of the working of the P.G.L. or G.L. or to describe the method of promotion to higher degree would, at this stage, be more likely to confuse than inform. I will leave that subject with the assurance that administrative office and higher degree are the prerogative of every Brother who aspires to them and who, by the quality of his service, is shown to deserve them.

The first, and possibly the most important fact, is that there are no contractual or insurance elements attached to membership of the Order. Grants from benevolent funds at any level, are not related to what you give but to what you need, and exactly the same principle applies to the services we give in our Convalescent Homes.

We really believe in the joy and satisfaction to be found in sharing the burden of our associates, and in helping them to solve the many human problems to which mankind is heir. The chain of goodwill, forged in this attitude of a regard for others, is strong enough to reach and hold each of us if we have submitted to the natural instinct of mankind to "assist those of the Brotherhood in difficulty or in need".

Before going on to an explanation of the various things to which we apply this gospel of good fellowship, it seems to me to be a good place to advise a searcher after the truth, who has absorbed this rather tentative and possibly inadequate picture of the spirit in which we work; if, in the reading he finds himself on unfamiliar ground, with no touch of responsive warmth in his heart; it might be as well for him and for us if he gives up the vision of hidden bonanzas in buffaloism; there is nothing in it of what the commercial mind would call "PROFIT".

So, if you are still with me. I will proceed to illustrate for your better understanding some of the machinery of buffaloism.

Membership of a Lodge of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes is open to all adult males without distinction as to social position, religious faiths or political beliefs. Before a candidate is accepted, he has to convince the members of the Lodge in which his application is made that he is a loyal citizen and that he is genuinely desirous of taking part in our work. On the basis of giving to the extent of his power, in cash or in service, whatever is required to meet the needs of a less fortunate Brother or the dependant widow and children of a deceased Brother.

The method of giving reflects the diversity of our membership ("to the extent of my power") and the basic contribution expected from members is fixed at a figure

it is reasonable to assume all members can pay without defaulting on their personal or family obligations.

It is called a registration fee and subject to one exception, which need not concern you at the moment, is paid each time a Brother enters a Lodge. This fee is divided and channelled into Minor Lodge, P.G.L. and Grand Lodge funds for the maintenance of our benevolent work and for administration.

It is after we have contributed this basic fee that the opportunity arises to practice our undertaking to give "to the extent of our power". And during any Lodge session you will be able to subscribe, of your own free will, with no penalty if you cannot, or special privilege or praise if you do. To the many benevolent and administrative funds of the Minor Lodge, P.G.Lodge and Grand Lodge which together form the power and implement the purpose of the Order.

These opportunities for voluntary giving, especially to our benevolent projects, serve a double purpose for not only do they provide a valued addition to the funds available in the various sections. Even more important for the stability of the Order, they serve as a reminder to everyone concerned how much depends upon the degree to which the brethren honour the obligation taken by them at initiation.

If you have stayed with us to this point you will know what value to place on any highly coloured stories you may have heard about us. Everything we do is part of a single-minded plan to secure and maintain the homes and lives of our members and their families. Protection of the fatherless, the orphan child, the widow, the sick and the aged, is all part of and stems from our own home experiences, the measure to which we succeed is the measure to which many thousands of buffaloes, all over the world, believe in and act on their promise to share the responsibility with us.

There is no real mystery about that promise and you cannot pretend you didn't understand. Simplicity itself is at the heart of it. You have promised in these terms, "I will also to the extent of my power, succour and defend a worthy Brother, under circumstances of difficulty and need. Nothing complicated about that; you obtain, with us, the right and the responsibility to give, to preserve these intensely practical and yet altruistic ideals for our mutual security.

Do not get the idea that we are completely introspective in our thoughts for other charities. There has never, in the last hundred years, been any worthwhile public endeavour to brighten the lives of the sick and needy in our own and other countries unless members of the R.A.O.B. have been actively involved in that endeavour. We can keep you busy.

This is the moment of decision, if there is a doubt in your mind do not come in; it will not be held against you; the man in whom we find no joy is the one who comes in, pledges his honour to participate, and then walks out because he "doesn't like it".

If you do come in just take this piece of friendly advice. Making judgement on procedures, of which your understanding is yet imperfect, is an unrewarding exercise. Time is all you need, procedures, unlike principles, can always be altered or modified. Concentrate on getting a grip of the potential underlying a strong dominant organisation based on the faiths to which we have jointly pledged our word. You may make it even more powerful for good.