

18<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Dear M W Bro George

Forgive this intrusion, but such serious events have unfolded and are unfolding in our province I cannot turn a blind eye any longer nor will I take a back seat and turn the other cheek whilst Antrim masons suffer and become disillusioned in their cabinet leadership. I choose not to direct this through normal channels, I treat what is in this communication as strictly sensitive and private as it concerns your appointee.

I seek a meeting with you as the Head of the Masonic Institution in Ireland on the following perceptions and aspirations which were integral to my portion of mediation and furthermore my concepts of what constitutes a freemason and his conduct.

In 2006, I firstly stood in support of two brethren who were wronged by another brother. Secondly I sought the PGL return to the ways of our L&C's of which many had been violated in the long running dispute with the two masons and a lodge. Finally I sought that where weaknesses were identifiable by the mediators, they would be strengthened and I brought forward some suggestions and recommendations myself to the table for consideration in this area, other breeches were discovered by the mediators, of which I am not party to the specific details, but again I respected that and accepted they would be identified to the parties for rectification themselves under the watchful eye of the mediation team.

In stating the above, merely signing of statements, making announcements at various forums and carrying out partially verbal commitments was not the end of mediation. It is implicit within the mediator's role, in the short term, to ensure neither party makes the same mistakes again and if they become aware of repeat offences, action should be taken, where that be warnings or recommendations to alter ones demeanor or conduct on a subject where actions contrary to the Masonic principles are known. Longer term it would be reasonable to assume the mediators could relax their watch since all obeyed and were standing by their commitments.

### **Overturning the desires and chosen path of the BoGP**

Regrettably it is obvious that in recent months our senior brethrens conduct has been less than Masonic. In October the PGM choose without the necessary authority but on the excuse that brethren were ringing him to home or meeting him at communications and stating they were confused, he decided to overturn the decision of his BoGP to receive reports from the RT or PAC. On this basis the RT withdrew its support for the way forward. We witnessed on that same night W Bro Wilson being expelled, prior to the start of the meeting, from the BoGP, yet the agenda asked for a report for the RT of which he is one part with I the other. The PGM had left a letter with the Deputy chairing the BoGP instructing a panel of masons be used to validate the information from both the RT & PAC. The names the PGM placed before the Board were questioned on the grounds of impartiality and to ensure pure Masonic principles for avoidance of conflict were adhered to. Impartial names were offered to the chair who took them and said he would report back to the PGM, the chair promised openness and transparency for disclosures during them meeting about a dispute with the Presbyterian church that the cabinet had ongoing for many years, sat uneasy with the Board. The PGM now admits in his latest statement, received in January 09, to the lodges that he seeks to change his suggested path in favor of employing consultants to make a recommendation for us.

### **Breaking our bylaws by advancement to GL without PGL Consent**

In December we had the PGM chair our alterations to bylaws. We recently find that GL received a letter seeking approval of GL in advance of the PGL in February. After explaining the situation to

GL we understand that PGL withdrew its proposal to place them before the 12<sup>th</sup> Feb meeting in favor of obeying our L&C's and only forwarding them after approval by PGL itself.

**Indiscrete and improper Masonic language not becoming a master  
Unmasonic conduct toward a PGL SoW who has responsibility for the PMH  
Violating his powers as a Grand Masters representative  
Failure to follow procedures laid down in the L&C's and bylaws (ie Notice of Motions on serious subject matters)**

In December and January I attempted to gain an insight into the proposed way forward that the cabinet was proposing, on both occasions I was told, by cabinet members, that on PGM's instructions I was not to be involved or told, I like W Bro Wilson, to use the PGM's phraseology, was of **no benefit** to their ideas. In January at the finance meeting, of which we had no advanced warning, merely a general statement upon the circular "The Future of the PMH", a scheme was proposed with the PGM using inappropriate language (using phrases like "I implore you to support us", "I as your PGM appeal to you to support me and the cabinet"), in doing so, he placed himself and his position inside his proposal, hence a vote against the proposal was a vote against him and the cabinet (unsurprisingly, despite there being other routes, no one raised an objection). I need not remind you of the master's oath and explanation going with it where guidance prohibits such actions. After gaining consent to spend £25,000 on the amended proposal, it came recommended to the BoGP on the same night. Once again his statement was read and it passed the floor to be placed before the PGL 28<sup>th</sup> February with recommendation.

**Violating his powers as a Grand Masters representative to circumvent the PGLA he is supposed to protect**

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> Feb the PGM announced he had committed the expenditure of the £25,000 to work. On Monday 9<sup>th</sup> Feb, I received a telephone call from the consultants advising they would like to see the RT (retention team) on Tuesday next. We declined this meeting as without the property owner's consent we too would be in breach of the L&C's. (By this I mean it has not been ratified at a stated meeting of PGL, the owners of the property). I am aware the office has received 6 letters since January to my knowledge, expressing the lodge's gravest concerns but still the PGM insists his way is the only way and to pot with everything else. The Notice of Motion placed properly before the Province has, by his actions, has been undermined. I also append the NOM for your consideration.

**Latent problems within the Cabinet which have and are causing derision within our province**

In the past 6-8 yrs I have been involved in the PGL affairs I have always strived to have openness and transparency. In 06 an accusation was leveled at me by our PGS that had potential for fraud within it. The mediators were made aware of it and in my defense I sought copies of the tenders to prove in some degree my innocence. I was deigned these by the PGS and therefore could not make a defense. These matters were closed off in mediation. I now understand from recent emails I have received that some of the cabinet are maintaining a "watch list" of suspect's (also PGL Officers) who had the capability to bug the hall. This same individual is denied free access to do his job as a PGL officer. This gravely disturbs me. I can permit you sight of the correspondence on same for verification purposes.

**Insurances and inept financial management procedures**

I also wish you to know that once again I sought an insurer's review of the property. The finance committee had agreed to permit the PGL office to renew on its own merit. Two days before renewal Oval James sought to provide renewal premiums. They spoke at length with me and I described an under utilized and therefore much reduced risk in the building. They obtained a week extension in cover whilst they obtained quotations from the market. Some 5 days later they

presented their offer to PGL office. Two days after that the present insurers rang the same insurance company seeking they're terms, two days later Oval James rang to discover we had remained with the present insurers. On each and every occasion Oval James have been involved we have seen a major reduction in premium. When they're not involved we see little or no change. In 2001 our premium was £3452, in 02 it rose sharply to £15415, 03 it rose again to £22,267, in 05 it sat at £17,094, 06 £12,294, 07 £8,965 and this year £6,500 approx.

My question on the above is simple, if we had only two days before renewal the insurers must have placed their offer, why then did they seek renewal terms from a different insurance company 7 days after renewal day had past? Whilst nothing can be proven, it smell's. I must insist in future all tenders are opened only by the finance committee and should be presented therein in an unopened fashion for approval. We then will have removed any chance of the debacle in 06 reoccurring and insurance year on year, I thought this would have been a simple exercise the cabinet would have accepted without it having to be put bluntly to them, it is after all common practice in public or organizations.

### **Conclusion**

In closing I now feel mediation has failed me in a large part. It has not fixed the weaknesses nor has GL, hence I consider these breaches in what I sought and felt I had obtained from mediation. I do not seek confrontation I try at all costs to avoid it, having now myself or family members given due and timely warning to no less than four of the cabinet, I understand, from recent, meetings with others, the PGM still does not heed or acknowledge his errors, I must seek you're advice on this and a recommended solution for the way forward in a final attempt to avoid outside agencies once again communicating on my behalf with GL and bringing our Order into an unwelcome spotlight. The entire cabinet is guilty by association having not distanced themselves from these irregularities.

Please let me know when suits you to discuss this matter. Obviously it is of some urgency as our forthcoming meeting in Feb approaches, at which I am aware, if the PGM remains to sail his titanic at full speed in iceberg ridden waters, challenges will be openly aired to his detriment and embarrassment for all present.

I have spoken at length on many of these subject matters with a man you know well and also a Londonderry resident Tim Coulter. I would not be adverse to you, if you feel it prudent, to discuss these matters with him to take his council.

S&F W Bro. Brian Hood

At the Finance Committee and the PGL BoGP on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009 the PGM suggested that 'outside' Consultants be engaged to report on the various options available to the Province with regard to the future of the PMH. As no prior notice was given of this item, decisions were sought without those outside the Cabinet being given time to consider alternative options. On reflection I consider that there would be considerable benefit, at least from a cost point of view, in forming a Panel from interested members in the Province, to report to the PGL through the PGL BoGP, as to the way forward. With the current state of the market it seems to me that selling or redevelopment are not viable propositions at present. This situation may continue for some considerable time, so there is no rush to do anything. This gives us an opportunity to get title deeds, and other aspects concerning the PMH, sorted out in an orderly manner.

I therefore wish to hand in the following NOTICE OF MOTION to PGL:-

## **NOTICE OF MOTION**

**I wish to propose that PGL form a Panel from interested brethren in the Province to prepare and submit report(s) on the future of the PMH.**

**The Panel to comprise of the following:-**

**Rt Wor Bro Joe Watson (Chair) PPAGM**

**Rt Wor Bro H Taggart PPSoW & GL foreign Rep**

**Wor Bro T McCurley**

**Wor Bro K Porter**

**Wor Bro R Black PPGSt**

**And three other nominated by the Brethren, should they so choose.**

**Proposer W Bro *Brian Hood***

**Seconder W Bro *Rennie Wilson***

**Date 6.2.09**

The following points are a catalogue of serious issues and problems discovered since I began a review of the Rosemary property and PGL positions after the BoGP appointed W Bro Wilson and I to look into this in May 08. I place them on record for your review and suggested direction to your appointee.

1. Only two members of the PAC know who the bidders are. Though advised it was due to commercially sensitive reason the RT can not comprehend that the other PAC members are not trusted, let alone the RT. It appears that the other members of PAC professionalism or integrity is not worthy of contributing to attain the best deal for the Province. This greatly concerns the RT as the PAC appointment was by the PGL with their full confidence. The RT has stated that all their documents are open for all to view. This transparency compliments the desires expressed in Grand Lodge that all in Masonic business, as far as practical, should be open and transparent.
2. The board's direction and authority to have the bidders names provided to the RT has been disregarded by the PAC. We are still at a loss to know and the chairman has advised that he needs to seek permission from a paid servant of PGL being the agent. The conspiracy theorists delight on such actions and it totally belittles the authority of the Board.
3. I know of one lodge who wrote to the PAC Chairman seeking clarity on a number of issues leading up the BoGP in May 08. They asked several questions some of which were; (if you desire to see the letter I am sure the lodge would be most obliging for they are most unhappy about such an arrogant answer from an APMG.)
  - Who owns the PMH, the answer directed them to see our solicitors (obviously they didn't know themselves).
  - How much will have left after capital gains computations, the answer directed them to the chancellor of the exchequer in London.
4. Ownership interest of the adjacent buildings to PMH, when first asked in June, John Dickson our registrar records an answer of "Cannot supply with any degree of certainty" it now transpires the PAC Chairman knew all the time but didn't enlighten anyone and when eventually advising the RT who the owners were, the chairman asks that we treat it as a "sensitive issue" implying therein its not for public / Masonic consumption. Draw your own conclusion on that.
5. The deeds are declared missing but a photocopy is available. An incomplete photocopy provided to us by the PAC chairman gave us no insight so we sought again a full copy. Some weeks later a full copy arrived of which we immediately gained a substantive lead producing a memorial of deed being found in the register of deeds offices. When we advised our Registrar of this, a fact which to that point he was unaware, when the Cabinet was told of this discovery, a fact which should have delighted them as it did me, the PAC Chairman said he always had the memorial of deed, **so parts of the deed have never been lost**. This again displays the inability or unwillingness of the Chairman of the PAC to pass on pertinent data to the RT. Little wonder the RT is confused with lack of clarity and transparency on process of decisions of PAC.

6. The Estate agent advised the RT during our tour of the building in May 08 that they follow instructions on how to market the hall and they were not offering advice. If we are not marketing PMH to obtain the best price why did we employ an estate agent? We do not comprehend this PAC action or why the disclosure of a possible new street was not brought to PAC by our estate agent.
7. During a meeting with the PAC chairman and PGL agent prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> May when our concept was brought to their attention it was remarked by the PGL agent that he had all ready seen an “advanced preview” of the Royal Exchange model. We were informed that our scheme bore little merit and that developer was aware that the PMH was being marketed. It is of concern that the PAC chairman was not aware of this possible new street and that the PGL agent was not marketing PMH building with any potential which the Royal Exchange quarter would bring. We should report that the chairman now does not recall that remark made by our agent and it is note worthy that the agent has not retracted his position.
8. Why have the planners been requested by the Chairman of the PAC to seek removal of our EHS protected stairwell windows as this matter never before the BoGP for ratification or discussion? This action in RT’s opinion could give some parties the impression we are making ready for a clandestine disposal of the property and again displays the provincial officer’s attitude towards its BoGP.
9. Literature from the liaison committee chairman given to me at the finance committee in early October from the PAC Chairman is now declared as private and sensitive. If we cannot use information provided to us through the liaison chairman, what use is there in giving it to us, or indeed asking another mason to take the time to provide and review the building for same, it just wastes time and personal masons money and further discredits the PAC working.
10. It was obvious to the RT and other persons present that the PGM had been misled upon his return from holiday regards our initial presentations to the PAC and its agents following on from some of the rebukes which we faced from the PGM, even though some were unwarranted, we choose to remain quite and accept it for the greater good not desiring to cause embarrassment at the meeting in late May. The RT can only assume this spin on how we presented the scheme to the PAC was more than likely common knowledge to the cabinet (see the minutes of liaison meeting for the PAC Chairman accepting he was adequately briefed beforehand but chose not to run with it). Statements made by the PAC chairman during it, where he openly criticized the other Masonic Orders exposed his true feelings for them and the way ahead, comments which any other right minded mason would be aghast at.
11. The proposed introduction of the unbiased reporting committee by the PGM for future debates raises issues which I address to you. It concerns us the unbiased reports to the BoGP in future will be by individuals, the majority of which sit in cabinet with the former chairman of the PAC and present chairman of the PAC, only one lone voice sits with neither. To be accurate and Masonic we should remove potential bias and potential conflict in favor of a truly neutral, yet an educated committee with a property and construction background. This was what had been proposed from the floor in October at our BoGP. Regrettably it appears

- our PGM now perceives that as a loss of control in the process and choses to spend £25,000 in employing consultants to get the information which we have freely available anyway using masons working in the “Lands and Valuations Agency etc”
12. As the SOW, now that my pro temper position is lifted due to the GL mediation announcement, I was requested to sign a declaration prohibiting my contracting company competing in future Masonic works for fear of a conflict of interest. This may be understandable but may not be the best for masonry of which we may debate another day. In the past I have successfully competitively tendered for work for the betterment of the lodges, sister provinces or indeed our own PGL, always therein seeking clarity and openness. This subject now stated, I advise you upon several conflicts of interest within the PAC. A law for one in Provincial must be law for all, as such; all must comply with the requirement by our PGL. Our estate agent, our solicitor are both paid agents and members of the PAC. Our PAC chairman is in private business practice connected to property. Surely then a mason can not act on a fee paid basis and have a vote on committee. Nor should a mason act in a role where information he attains in his private capacity in property may influence his decisions, especially when he is unable to share same with his fellow committee members and the board, a fact which the chairman has declared to us recently. To this end those with conflict of interests should remove themselves from the PAC or be removed by those in seniority or the BoGP but then this BoGP have not been informed of these by the cabinet.
  13. The PAC’s continuing inability to explore retention schemes and its possibilities to which the BoGP has concurred and supported is contrary to the reasons of its conception.
  14. At the finance committee in September it was stated by The DPGM that “a brother had **instructed** Rosemary (our office secretary) to issue a room rental for £50 to a committee, this had been brought to the Deputy’s attention by R W Bro JL Frazer”. The portrayal to the finance committee was, I believe unintentionally on the Deputy’s part, disingenuous, but I believe fully understood how it would be perceived by the committee on R W Bro Frazer’s part. I know the brother identified himself to the PGM at a meeting and gave a full explanation of what took place to our registrar, advising he had **suggested** a fee of £50, three witnesses to what was said are available if you wish to enquire. Ronnie Wilson, the brother concerned, is willing to be interviewed with Rosemary and the two other independent witnesses, although one being Alan Askin you may not desire such. I must urge change within for what has gone on before cannot continue, to me viewing it, half truths and misguided spin is at work and the PGM / Cabinet witnessing these facts fail to initiate any apparent changes.
  15. The BoGP has raised serious questions for the PAC Chairman at several meetings in 2008, this document, whilst not in the general Masonic arena, is testament to that. The Cabinet and some from the floor have used language openly at forums recently which has demeaned our Masonic meetings such as **castigated, spurious, bastard, acrimonious and hijacked**, brethren and more so cabinet members should watch their tongues. Only one cabinet member has ever been vigorously challenged, no other members have faced major rebuke or criticism, it

- is the Boards role to seek the truth and debate the information brought to it, hence I conclude, a problem lies with one person alone but by inaction of his fellow cabinet brethren and PGM, resentment grows across our province and this breeds disillusion.
16. The Board was given a paper from the PAC chairman at the September BoGP. The last paragraph clearly states the current Chairman has only served the last two years and his predecessor is the PGM. I have to say, not that the PGM needs or I'm sure desire my defense of his character, the problems the Province is encountering have all occurred in the most recent years under the present chairman's time and I don't like the connotations of the blame game against our PGM.
  17. We are now told the PGLA have serious issues with the Rosemary Street Church, for some months we have waited for the green light to move on gaining way leaf permissions on this issue. Where is the bridge building of masons, is it not more truthful to say some of the PGLA cabinet at one time had issues with the church, the PGLA and the BoGP were ever made aware of this, had they of been, they surely would have addressed a former cabinet member instructing him to make good the damage done. Little wonder writers to the Presbyterian Herald give us such a hard time when we compound our own mistakes like this.
  18. It is undeniable that the PMH is in a much worse situation regards vesting. With a near vacant building, the PAC have left our flank unguarded and exposed to detriment. The DSD could have sought vesting at the value attained by bidders due to the then current marketing strategy if an appointed and agreed preferred developer were chosen. With the RT's intervention, and reversing the notion of selling up or moving we bolstered our position for the betterment of Antrim Masons, but now having resigned we never shall have further proposals to retain our building.
  19. The production of the FAQ booklet was a misguided publication. Many of the answers therein were wrong, they in fact mislead the Province and masons therein.
  20. The PAC Chairman tells us he will use First Title to provide indemnity insurance for our lost title deed. He tells us the memorial of deed is of no material value, yet when we obtain the first title application form, it asks and seeks those very facts, a matter which again he refuted in a liaison meeting, stating the form we firstly obtained from Sun Alliance was much more complicated than what information First Title sought. **How can we continue to trust someone who clearly either is making things up as we go along or is confused himself, either way that person cannot remain in a senior position with responsibilities entailed in holding an APMG position resting on his shoulders.**
  21. It is notable that a recent report disclosed our Masonic charity investments have depreciated some 40% in real terms owing to the credit crunch and unsteady institutions, hopefully these losses will rally and return in the longer term, although how quickly remains to be seen. This further encourages the RT that we brought to the board clear unambiguous facts, figures and information so that prudent decisions were made wisely. Unlike investments, rarely does property in



a city centre drop significantly in value, a further reason why the RT felt we should remain fast.

22. We have been advised that our suggestion to look at the investment of PGL bank funds, in the last accounts sitting at £168K approx, is not within our remit. I disagree, we only make these observations given that the PAC could obtain 8% nett interest. They opened the debate with their document, now when we tread into it we're told politely keep out. We only suggest that any money would be better invested and that the finance committee surely would be glad to know where. Should this suggestion be uneconomic or unwise, so-be-it, but, at least we had asked the proper committee to look at it.