

A Case for a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean

(Condensed)

By W. Bro. Courtney Abel PADGDC, PM 9166EC, 9335EC

“Sad is the day for any man when he becomes absolutely satisfied with the life he is living, the thoughts that he is thinking and the deeds that he is doing; when there ceases to be forever beating at the doors of his soul a desire to do something larger which he feels and knows he was meant and intended to do.”

Phillips Brooks

INTRODUCTION

The Freemason system to which we all belong within the Caribbean has been described as “the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God who assemble in lodges, elect officers to govern their affairs, make new Masons according to ancient tradition and landmarks of the craft, visit lodges, celebrate fellowship at festive boards and engage in all activities that traditional Lodges of Freemasonry, since time immemorial, have practiced in the pursuit of happiness”.¹

This is a case for a Sovereign Grand Lodge for and of the Eastern Caribbean at present being officially debated under the auspices of the District Grand Lodges of Barbados & the Eastern Caribbean (EC) and the District Grand Lodge of Barbados (SC) within the territories of the Eastern Caribbean including Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Tortola.

The discussion is however not confined to the above countries of the Eastern Caribbean as it obviously touches and concerns and has generated interest outside of the above officially participating countries and Districts of the Eastern Caribbean.

What were the Origins of Freemasonry and the Lodge System ?

The actual origins of this now global system of Freemasonry are shrouded in mystery, but for the purposes of this paper we can confidently assert that Freemasonry, as we now know it, and as documented, had its origins in the United Kingdom (England Scotland and Ireland).

Freemasonry appears to be a peculiarly British invention which has been bequeathed to us in the Caribbean, through our British imperial and colonial connection, along with such things as our language, system of Government and laws and (to a large extent) our culture.

1717 the Establishment of the First Grand Lodge

The presence and growth of Freemasonry before 1717, the year credited with the establishment of the first or “Premier Grand Lodge”, when Freemasonry coming into the open, as it were, in the UK, is difficult to be certain about. But the first or so called “Premier Grand Lodge” was formed, by the Premier Grand Lodge in London in 1717, by four London lodges.

After 1717, the growth and spread of Freemasonry has been easier to follow as the Premier Grand Lodge attempted to control this growth by establishing and settling criteria by which lodges could be deemed “regular” or “irregular” according to whether new lodges were permitted or warranted by them and found their way onto its list of Lodges first published in 1723².

Birth of other UK Grand Lodges and the Spread of Freemasonry to the World (including the Atlantic World).

Within the UK separate Grand Lodges were formed in Ireland (Grand Lodge of Ireland) in 1725, in Scotland in 1736 (Grand Lodge of Scotland) and in England itself in 1751 (the “Antients” Grand Lodge) because of schisms which developed. These schisms arose from resentment which grew from Ireland, Scotland and in England and from other English towns (especially from York which considered itself the birthplace of Freemasonry) towards the perceived arrogance of the new Grand Lodge. The conflict was at times public and violent.

The Premier Grand Lodge (“the Moderns”), The Grand Lodge of Ireland, The Grand Lodge of Scotland and The “Antients” and with developing rivalry between them, took Freemasonry around the globe, even as they continued their conflict and as the British built its empire and helped to establish the modern epochal global world³.

Within the Eastern Caribbean the Premier Grand Lodge completely monopolized the warranting of lodges until 1763 when the Antients and the Scottish Grand Lodge in 1767 first made their appearance in the region.

The Early Development of ‘Provincial’ and ‘Grand’ Lodge Systems

The ‘Provincial’ Grand Lodge system, with its own “Provincial Grand Master” as the administrative means of managing the new Grand Lodge’s expansion and of its supervision of lodges outside of London, emerged in England from the mid 1720’s. This approach necessarily and inexorably was extended to lodges overseas.

The Provincial Grand Master was in effect the Grand Masters representative in the locality for which he was appointed and they were expected to perform duties including “collecting and remitting fees and dues, keeping registers, corresponding with and reporting to the Metropolitan Grand Lodge, settling disputes, and disciplining lodges or brethren who violated regulations”⁴. They also had responsibility for the functioning and operation of the Provincial Grand Lodge itself and for the establishment of lodges within their province and under their jurisdiction⁵.

We have had in the Eastern Caribbean “Provincial” Grand Lodges since the Provincial Grand Lodge of Montserrat in 1734 under the Grand Mastership of Bro James Watson.

The Provincial Grand Lodges within the Eastern Caribbean have since included the Provincial Grand Lodge of Leeward Caribbee Islands which was formed on the 27th April 1738, and based in Antigua, under the Grand Mastership of Captain General and Commander in Chief in and over the Islands, Brother William Issac. This was after the formation of “Parham Lodge and Bakers Lodge in Antigua respectively in January 1737 and March 1738.

This was followed by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Barbados which was formed in 1740 under the Grand Mastership of Thomas Baxter and which has continued to the present with brief interregnums, since then, becoming a 'District' in 1890.

These and other Provincial Grand Lodges have been formed for and functioned in the Eastern Caribbean including the Scottish West Indies Province in St. Christopher between 1786 to 1792, the English Province of Montserrat and Nevis in 1767, the Irish Provincial Grand Lodge in Barbados between 1804 and 1828, the English Provincial Grand Lodge in Grenada created in October 1826 governing Grenada as well as Tobago, St. Lucia and St. Vincent; and the Scottish Provincial Grand Lodge created in 1831 extending its jurisdiction at first to the whole of the West Indies and then a few years later covering the Windward Islands only before shrinking to Grenada alone by 1843.

Slavery and Freemasonry

In the 1720s and 1730s the part of the Atlantic world being explored, settled and colonized, and with which trade was being conducted by the British and other European countries, included 'the Americas' which then contained the Caribbean.

Freemasonry was spread to the Caribbean, and indeed around the world, as the British Empire was then being spread by soldiers and naval officers, administrators, colonizers and merchants simultaneous with the British imperial and colonial expansion into the new, including the Atlantic, world⁶.

The eastern parts of the Caribbean, which comprised Barbados and the Leeward, Windward and Virgin Islands, for the purpose of this paper we have called the Eastern Caribbean.

The period 1713-1807 when the British had shipped three and a quarter million Africans across the Atlantic Ocean as enslaved persons to meet the largely European demand for slave-grown sugar⁷ creating the most significant social and moral issue of the time for Freemasonry and peoples of the Eastern Caribbean.

Barbados had earlier at first lead the way for the whole Caribbean (including Jamaica) and North America with the economic triangular system of forced importation of slave labour from Africa to slave plantations leading to this becoming the dominant feature of life in the colonial and tropical Americas and in the Eastern Caribbean⁸.

It was within the context largely of what has been called the triangular trade in goods, and slaves as goods, between Europe, Africa and the Caribbean and the Americas, and the social and economic life of the sugar plantations and slavery for Africans, that possibly the first Masonic Province in the Eastern Caribbean was established for Montserrat in 1734 or 1737.

Slaves were obviously denied membership of the fraternity and by all of the early Constitutions so were persons who obtained their freedom, as being "freeborn" was officially the condition of membership of initiation into the Order. Being a freeman ("free born" and later changed to "free man") was and remains to this day a precondition for initiation into the order.

Freemasonry and Colonialism

Freemasonry has since penetrated the four quarters of the globe and was indeed instrumental, and an important mechanism for ushering in, and has indeed become, an important product of the highly integrated and globalised world it helped to create.

The British Empire, as it developed and grew in the eighteenth century, provided fertile ground for the building and functioning of an extensive Masonic network (among largely white anglo-saxon protestants). But in this period, Masonry did, at times, live up to its founding ideas of equality and the brotherhood of man internationally (the ideology of cosmopolitan brotherhood) by having room at times for Jews and Muslims, African Americans, South Asians, and others.

As Colonies eventually achieved nation status many of the lodges within them broke away from the UK Grand Lodges and formed and operated under independent local Grand Lodges, joining Grand Lodges formed in other countries from Europe and elsewhere as sovereign independent Grand Lodges which are generally recognised by the original UK Grand Lodges.

But other Lodges decided to remain with their parent UK Grand Lodge – resulting in, for instance, UGLE still having on their register some 750 lodges overseas, principally in Commonwealth countries.

Descendants of African Slaves and Freemasonry in the late 18th Century

It is clear that the inclusive enlightenment ideology, of the brotherhood of man, and of showing acts of charity and benevolence towards each other and society which underlay the ideology of Freemasonry, and shared then and now by members of the craft, would have had such a revolutionary impact in France and in North America, and, when coupled with the attack on the notion that Africans were less than humans, was going to have an impact on undermining the institution of slavery itself.

It was also going to, and did attract, freeborn Africans (such as the children of slave-owners), freed slaves and black persons generally in the Americas, Europe, and the Caribbean to it, as a means of demonstrating their freedom, equality and hard earned independence as well as, in a small number of cases, their own improving positions and sometimes increasing wealth and prestige.

Prince Hall along with fourteen other free black men were initiated into Lodge No. 441, Irish Constitution, attached to the 38th Regiment of Foot, British Army garrisoned at Castle William (now Fort Independence) Boston Harbour on 6th March 1775, and who had been fighting for the British in its war against the revolting colonists in North America. Subsequently Prince Hall obtained a warrant by the Premier Grand Lodge in September 1784 to form his own African Lodge No. 459⁹ the first Masonic lodge for black men in North America. African Lodge in due course made a declaration of independence in 1827 forming a Grand Lodge of its own which was renamed in 1847 Prince Hall Grand Lodge.

1807: The Beginning of the End for Slavery: Abolition of Slave Trade

It was not until the late 1700's that Europeans, because of moral, religious and economic factors (including the obvious humanity of Africans which was being denied, horrible nature of the practices associated with the institution, including middle passage, and significant rebellion by slave societies) began to seriously question the morality and undermine the economics of this by then vibrant and widespread economic and social institution of treating "black people as mere items of trade"¹⁰.

Freemasonry in time proved to contain within itself the seeds of the destruction of the racial order existing in the 18th and 19th century helping to lead to the global transformation of the world society, containing as it does, ideas of a more objective and scientific world and of a democratic and egalitarian ideals separated from formal religion.

Freemasonry contributed to the abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament on the 8th March 1807 and the much later Act legally emancipating slaves with effect from 1st August 1834 (even though it immediately provided for apprenticeship of the emancipated slaves).

1813: The formation of the United Grand Lodge of England

The 27th December 1813 saw the historic coming together of the Antients and Moderns to form the United Grand Lodge of England following intricate and protracted negotiations and also the sorting out of much administrative details such as agreeing to a single re-numbering of the two lists of Lodges and the erasures of lodges that had ceased to function as part of the administrative tidying up process.

Emancipation and Attempts by Former Slaves to Become Masons in the Eastern Caribbean

Following the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 the emphasis of the abolitionist shifted to the emancipation of slaves.

With emancipation, quickly came the demand by emancipated slaves for education for themselves and their children and the inevitable assertion by them of human and political rights and all other social rights that accompany these rights including claims for entry into the craft, and, given the nature of the Plantation societies, then came the attempts to block entry.

On the 7th April 1840 James W. Sinckler, Past Master of the Albion Lodge in Barbados wrote to UGLE pointing out that the stipulation in the Charges restricting admission to “freeborn” persons served to disqualify “reputable coloured gentlemen” from membership¹¹.

Lodge Amity No. 277 (I.C.) on the 2nd July 1840 sent a query to the Grand Lodge of Ireland enquiring how far the Acts freeing slaves affected the former slave’s admissibility into the Order in Barbados.

The response by those opposing the entry of slaves into the craft was to point out that the “Charges” prohibited the entry of persons born into slavery by limiting entry to men who were “free-born”.

The issue of the admission of blacks and in particular former slaves into masonry was in the 1840’s a hot question among all of the British Grand Lodges. It was then, after early 1844, that Hibernian Lodge No. 622 in Barbados applied for an interpretation of “freeborn”. They were informed that a former slave was “in the ordinary course” ineligible to be admitted, unless a special dispensation was obtained from Grand Lodge. Taking the hint Hibernian Lodge No. 622 applied for special permission to admit two former slaves into a Lodge under the Grand Lodge of Ireland. This they were granted.

The same question came before UGLE in 1847 from Antigua and St. Vincent which prompted its Grand Master and officers to “obviate the difficulty felt on the proposition of such a person for initiation”. UGLE on the 1st September 1847 decided to amend the Constitutions to read “free man” rather than “free born”. It was done expressly “to give relief to the colonies”. This decision opened the way for former slaves to be admitted into the order.

Bit by bit and as education for blacks gradually spread and their economic and social status improved this was reflected by the gradual admission of this latter group into masonry.

At first the admission as members of these Lodges was confined to the economic better off members of this group well into the latter part of the 20th century, but gradually barriers broke down and Lodges became more and more inclusive.

The Social and Political Developments in the Caribbean in the 20th Century

As the 19th Century gave way to the beginning of the 20th Century social and economic improvements led to the increasing demands for, coupled with gradual success of greater and greater political and constitutional reform and advancement for emancipated slaves and their children.

All of this was aided by educated articulate and determined political elite, which included the progeny of freed slaves, supported by the mass of the population, demanding decolonization and the right to independence and self-government.

Social and Political developments have taken place within the Caribbean which has led to most of the former colonies winning independence from the UK in the 1960's. These Caribbean countries have since established their own regional socio-economic organizations and blocks such as CARICOM and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) as the way forward to manage their aspirations for development and change. As such many Masons, following on from these developments no longer see the need for a Grand Lodge administering the craft in the Caribbean so far removed from the action (in the UK) in circumstances where leaders of the craft feel the self-confidence to manage the Masonic affairs of the region for themselves.

What can be learned about Freemasonry in the Eastern Caribbean from our History?

The historical records of the formation and activities of craft Freemasonry in the Eastern Caribbean teaches us that we have a rich legacy of craft Freemasonry in the Eastern Caribbean. This has bequeathed to us a long history and traditions upon which we can build.

In the years between 1713 to the present date a total of about 108 UK craft lodges were formed for or working within the Eastern Caribbean commencing with a lodge in Montserrat in 1734 and Parham Lodge in Antigua in 1737-38 and ending with Preceptors Memorial Lodge in Barbados in 1999.

Between 1713 and 1813 (the formation of the UGLE) a total of 49 lodges had been formed or were working in the Eastern Caribbean, 29 of which were formed by the Premier Grand Lodge, 13 by the Antients, 6 by the Grand Lodge of Scotland and 3 by the Grand Lodge of Ireland. But the number of Scottish and Irish lodges formed or working within the Eastern Caribbean increased (principally in Barbados) in the latter years of the period.

Between 1813 and 1900, English lodges (Moderns and Antients) remained the largest lodges of the various constitutions formed within the Eastern Caribbean as follows: 24 English lodges, 8 Irish (all in Barbados) and 6 Scottish.

Between 1901 to the present English lodges remained the majority of lodges formed or working within the Eastern Caribbean with Irish lodges ceasing to work in the region altogether: leaving the 20 lodges formed or working of which 13 were English and 8 were Scottish.

Over the years practically all of the Islands of the Eastern Caribbean have been, and are still involved in the work of Freemasonry.

The Islands within the Eastern Caribbean with the number of craft lodges which existed within the English speaking Eastern Caribbean in the order in which they were first formed are as follows: Montserrat (4), Antigua (13), St. Christopher (13), Barbados (35), St. Eustatius (3), Virgin Islands (7), Grenada (23), Dominica (5), St. Vincent (7), St. Lucia (3), Anguilla (3). Certainly other lodges may have been formed by or working under non UK Constitutions (Dutch or French) in Islands like the Virgin Islands and St. Lucia) but these have not for the sake of simplicity been included.

The existing lodges in the Eastern Caribbean, their existing number and Constitution year of formation and Island in which they exist are as follows: Albion No. 196 EC (1790) in Barbados; Harmonic No. 356 EC (1818) in St. Thomas USVI; Mount Olive NO. 336 SC (1835) in St. Christopher; St. Johns No. 493 EC (1843) in Antigua; Lodge Scotia No. 340 SC (1844) in Barbados; St. Michael's No 2253 EC (1888) in Barbados, St. George No. 2616 EC (1896) in St. Vincent; Abercrombie No. 2788EC (Consecrated 8th February 1900) in St. Lucia; Caribbee No. 2829 EC (Consecrated 30th October 1900) in Antigua; Lodge St. George No. 3072 EC in Grenada; Lodge Thistle No. 1014 SC (1906) in Barbados; Lodge St. John No. 1062 SC (1909) in Barbados; St. George No. 3421 EC (1910); St. Andrew No. 4211 SC (1921) in Grenada; St. Anthony Lodge No. 4684 EC (1924) in Montserrat; St. Andrew No. 1509 SC (1956) in Barbados; Union No. 7551 EC (1957) in Barbados; Lodge Unity No. 1625 SC (1966) in Barbados; Conception No. 8346 EC (1970) in Grenada; St. Ursula's No. 8952 EC (1980) in Tortola BVI; Research Lodge of Amity No. 9073 (1982) in Barbados; Lodge Pelican No. 1750 SC (1983) in Barbados; Unity No. 9166 EC (1985) in Anguilla; Anguilla Masters Lodge No. 9335 EC (1989) in Anguilla; Lodge St. Andrew No. 1794 SC 91992) in Grenada; St. Thomas Lodge No. 9679 EC (1998) in St. Thomas USVI; and Perceptors memorial Lodge No. 9714 EC ((1999) in Barbados.

Immediate Trigger of the Present Grand Lodge Discussions

The present discussion about forming a Sovereign Grand Lodge taking place within the Eastern Caribbean, which is not new (the first taking place in December 1822 when the Irish threatened to establish a Grand Lodge of the West Indies to rival the English and Scottish Grand Lodge¹²) appears to have been triggered by a number of recent events:

- (a) The construction of a new Masonic complex in Barbados, as a joint English/Scottish endeavour which has brought the two constitutions closer and working together to conceive and to physically build something of an enduring quality for their joint use and benefit (prophetically and symbolically no less than a grand Masonic Hall). This has obviously made all realize that cooperation is possible by the two Constitutions for the good of the craft in particular and the world in general. Further the Masonic Hall which has been successfully completed has all the hallmarks of a Masonic Hall fit for a Grand Lodge.
- (b) In an age when modern technological communications is shrinking an already globalised world, UGLE has been perceived as distant and aloof, as exemplified by its recent unilateral withdrawal of Grand Lodge News Letters and other publications to the general membership within the Caribbean, as well the withdrawal of those separate News Letters to Wardens, and the New Samaritan Fund letters to the rank and file outside the UK. All of these have resulted in a feeling, expressed by the District Grand Master, that "UGLE was cutting the District Grand Lodge adrift and that the District was not getting value for its money".

This has been bolstered in the Eastern Caribbean by the following:

- (a) The District Grand Lodge of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean (English Constitution) has been managing the affairs of the craft in the Eastern Caribbean and has had to devise the mechanisms to do so with minimal intervention from the United Grand Lodge of England.
- (b) The operation of the Barbados Masonic Provident Society which started on 27th May 1947 and which on the 14th November 1996 changed its name to Masonic Provident Society of the Eastern Caribbean, has since then successfully been functioning across the Eastern Caribbean while based in Barbados.
- (c) The recent recognition of Prince Hall Masonry by UGLE and the Grand Lodge of Scotland, particularly in Barbados, has resulted in an increased contact by these Constitutions (including now allowed inter-visiting) with the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Caribbean and Jurisdiction in Barbados and has allowed a closer appreciation of the work and operation of a Grand Lodge.

At what Stage are we in the Present Process?

As a result of the above the District Grand Master of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean (English Constitution) asked its District Board of General Purposes of the DGL (DBGP) to make due enquiry among its membership as to whether there was interest at this time within the District for the establishment of a Grand Lodge, and having found that there was, formed and instructed various Committees, to look into various matters such as dues, regalia, Constitutions etc, to determine if the formation of a Grand Lodge was feasible and if so to lead the discussion of the formation of a Grand Lodge within the craft of the region.

The District Grand Master, the Baron of Ormiston, has constantly reiterated, and at the recent DBGP repeated, that the present discussion about establishing a Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean is in its early stages and to determine its feasibility.

But there remains a lot of confusion about what is a Worshipful Grand Lodge and what are the changes which are likely to result if we do elect to form one in the Eastern Caribbean to operate under and to be governed by. So this paper is an attempt to navigate that confusion and produce some clarity

So What is a Grand Lodge and what is the Significance of Forming One?

A Grand Lodge has been defined as:

“a congregation of the representatives of the subordinate Lodges in a jurisdiction, with the Grand Master and Grand Officers at their head”, and as “the supreme Masonic authority of the jurisdiction in which it is situated, and faithful allegiance and implicit obedience is due to it from all the Lodges and Freemasons residing therein”¹³.

In short a Grand Lodge is a Lodge that is a sovereign and independent body that has ultimate authority over all aspects of subordinate lodges and the masonic lives of persons under its jurisdiction. It governs all aspects of the craft over which it has authority.

It is often asked, even by senior masons, would it be English or Scottish or Irish? Or what constitution would it be? This belies a misunderstanding of what a Worshipful Grand Lodge is and what it means to speak of a Sovereign Grand Lodge.

At present there are about 161 Worshipful Grand Lodges throughout the world, all of which are derived by origin from one of the four original UK Grand Lodges. These Sovereign Grand Lodges are spread throughout the Commonwealth (17), Europe (29), Asia (4), Africa (10), USA (75), South America (16), Central America (5) and the Caribbean (5).

Each Grand Lodge is a “Sovereign” and independent body possessing, functions, powers and prerogatives which are vast, extensive and important in nature.

They function and have powers like those of a State, usually divided into three classes, the Legislative, the Judiciary and the Executive. In its legislative capacity each Worshipful Grand Lodge makes the laws for all the lodges it governs (or which are under its jurisdiction), and in its judicial capacity it interprets, explains and applies these laws, and in their executive capacity it enforces them.

The only limitation on the legislative powers of a Worshipful Grand Lodge is said to be that such powers are subject to its Landmarks. There may be some debate about some of these Landmarks (such as the right of visitation) but there probably is no debate about the core values of Masonry constituting the Craft as we know it.

The judicial powers of a Grand Lodge are said to be both original and appellate in the sense that a Grand Lodge can hear disputes within subordinate lodges or between two or more lodges in the first instance (from the start) or in the second instance by way of appeal from an earlier decision.

All the Executive powers (i.e. of managing or implementing the laws and decisions of a Grand Lodge), when the Worshipful Grand Lodge is not in session, are reposed in its Grand Master, as the representative of the Lodge, under a delegated power, as well potentially to other officers of the Grand Lodge.

The Grand Master’s prerogatives and duties are inherent in the office and not derived from any modern Constitution and his prerogative powers are subject to his annual election by the Craft and he is responsible to the whole craft, through the Grand Lodge itself.

It is because of the hallowed history of the office of Grand Master and the considerable powers which attach to this office, that the craft is often described as an autocracy not a democracy. However, it is possible that the balance between the two (autocracy and democracy) can be adjusted in one direction rather than in another in the founding of a New Grand Lodge and in the drafting of its Constitutional documents.

How is a Grand Lodge Formed?

It seems to have been established practice that all that is required is that at least three Lodges must come together and concur in the formation of a Grand Lodge. Indeed, as we have seen, the first or Premier Grand Lodge was formed only with four Lodges in 1717.

There does not appear to be any requirement that the concurrence be of a particular majority (whether simple or some other greater figure such as two thirds), but the more universal the consensus, the more successful is likely to be the organizational process of transition into a Grand Lodge.

Once these (at least) three Lodges organise into a Grand Lodge it can then grant Warrants to the constituent lodges which formed it. These Warrants will take effect upon their surrendering the Warrants under which they originally acted to the Grand Lodges from which they derived them.

It would appear that this is all that is constitutionally required to form a Grand Lodge and the Grand Lodge thus formed at once assumes all the prerogatives of a Sovereign Grand Lodge and thereby acquires exclusive jurisdiction over the forming Lodges and the territory in question.

Recognition of a Sovereign Grand Lodge

The question of Recognition of a Sovereign Grand Lodge by other Grand Lodges is a separate matter from the formation of the Grand Lodge.

UGLE and its Grand Master, applying the considerations contained in its published statement of the “Basic Principles for Grand Lodge Recognition” (approved on 4th September 1929)¹⁴, will then recognise a Grand Lodge as a regular and independent Sovereign Body and the Grand Master of UGLE will then signify that it is his intention not to grant for the future any warrant for a new Lodge in that jurisdiction, provided that the following apply:

- (a) After recognition a special meeting is held by each Lodge in the District.
- (b) At the special meeting called only for the purpose to consider and vote on the question whether they desire that the Lodge shall continue under UGLE or join the new Grand Lodge with a majority of two-thirds being required to carry the vote.
- (c) A second meeting to discuss the same question could only be made with the consent of the Grand Master of UGLE.

This then appears to be the procedure which will be followed under UGLE in the present discussion taking place within the craft in the District of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, which once concluded will definitively decide the status of the present District and the question of the formation of a Grand Lodge.

The UGLE guidelines for the recognition of a Grand Lodge is not dissimilar from those of the Grand Lodge of Scotland and so far as the Lodges at present existing within Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean under these two Grand Lodges are concerned (and indeed the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Caribbean and Jurisdiction, or indeed any of the other Caribbean Grand Lodges), should not pose any impediment to recognition by any of these Grand Lodges as all such Grand Lodges recognize each other and are in amity.

Why is there no Worshipful Grand Lodge in the English Speaking Caribbean (outside of Prince Hall)?

In the Caribbean, as noted above, there has not been established in the English speaking Caribbean, a Sovereign Grand Lodge, formed out of the UK Grand Lodges of UGLE, Ireland and Scotland. Why is this?

It is felt by many that the process of decolonization (which is far from complete in the countries and territories of the Caribbean) in the case of those which have achieved independence, was negotiated with the British Imperial Government. As noted by the well known Caribbean Constitutional Jurist, Professor McIntosh: “...[decolonization] was not a revolutionary repudiation of our colonial past”¹⁵ and many of such countries still identify with, and have a longing to be a part of the colonial master and doubt our ability to govern and to rule ourselves.

Among Freemasons in the Caribbean, it is often theorized, that there still persists a feeling that membership of the UK Grand Lodges is seen as something of a status symbol. Within this theory it has

been said we in the Caribbean share a view that Professor McIntosh has called the “mythology of empire” which he suggests “has fostered the belief that the colonizer and the colonized share a common identity”, and which he identified as the attitude that needs to change.

In another somewhat more sympathetic view it is theorized that we have in fact and in reality had Grand Lodges of the Caribbean almost as long as we have had Freemasonry here but in the form of “Provincial” or “District” Grand Lodges which have largely functioned independently and with little interference from the UK Grand Lodges. But that we have chosen, whether because of lack of confidence or for convenience, to keep UK Grand Lodges at the helm to mediate and resolve any disputes which may arise among us, as a safety mechanism.

It is often pointed out that the present District Grand Lodge of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, with jurisdiction extending the full length of the Eastern Caribbean, is all but in name a Grand Lodge lacking the necessary element of sovereignty which will complete its independence, as it functions almost without hindrance as a Grand Lodge.

It may be seen from the above that, under this view the fact that there was not a Sovereign Grand Lodge of and within the English speaking Caribbean (outside of Prince Hall) was because of a powerful hold that the empire building activities of the British had on their former colonies which undermined our self-confidence in operating our own Grand Lodge within the Caribbean.

It is certainly being suggested here that the time has come, and that Masons within the Caribbean have arrived at the point, where they have the skills and self confidence to shake off these shackles of Colonialism and embark on establishing our own Sovereign Grand Lodge.

Senior Masons Caution against Forming Grand Lodge

An earlier version of this paper generated some interesting responses and discussion within the Eastern Caribbean including from W. Bro Cecil B. Lawless PSGD, PDDGM; W. Bro. G. J. R. De Freitas, PDSGW, Pres. DBB and W. Bro. Peter Ross, PDSGW, PPres.DBGP. These were thankfully received.

The comments from these sources were thoughtful and demonstrate not only their deep understanding of Freemasonry in general but also a profound understanding of Freemasonry in the Caribbean in particular

Out of respect for these brethren and in order to present a rounded picture of the arguments concerning the formation of a Grand Lodge at this time, the opposing views which surfaced in opposition to the establishment of a Grand Lodge are now set out and may be summarized in the following propositions:

1. That a full debate involving younger masons and with an agenda fixed by them, should be generated. This should result in a general consensus (particularly among these younger masons) before arriving at a conclusion about the formation of a Grand Lodge.
2. That the cataclysmic change that would be involved in establishing a Grand Lodge should not be embarked upon without good reason, lightly or in haste but should be weighed very carefully, and that the costs and the benefits carefully considered, before embarking on such a course.
3. That on the whole the circumstances or conditions for embarking on such major change do not exist: such as an onerous or burdensome existing relationship with UK Grand Lodges. It is suggested that if there is a perceived problem with UGLE that the fault may lie at our end.

4. In addition the prospect of successfully establishing a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean with the requisite prestige and viability is not good because the present proposal is not sufficiently strong or attractive (i.e. does not offer anything which is comparable or better than that existing at present) to attract a sufficient number of lodges to give up their existing relationships and associations with the UK based Grand Lodges to join the proposed Grand Lodge.
5. That there does not exist the confidence in the possible leadership of the Grand Lodge to successfully negotiate the many difficult hurdles (such as possibly incompatible Constitutional and protocol differences, to agree on a common way forward and deal with divisive issues such as establishment of a Grand Master and an administrative and focal site for location of the Grand Lodge i.e. a Masonic Hall) so as to implement a prestigious and successful Grand Lodge in the near future and to preserve the original essence of freemasonry which emanated from the UK Lodges from whence we all came.
6. On the other hand, it has been suggested by one senior mason, who strongly opposes the “runt” of a Grand Lodge comprising only of our present English District Grand Lodge of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and the Scottish District Grand Lodge of Barbados that the present proposal of a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean should be dismissed until a more comprehensive proposal involving other Caribbean territories is explored, thought out and submitted (within three years). He strongly supports the concept of a FULL Grand Lodge, encompassing other areas of the English speaking Caribbean, such as Trinidad and Guyana (utilizing avenues existing amongst other so called higher orders which exist across the Caribbean), creating a “Super Highway of a Caribbean Lodge” and taking advantage of economies of scale which would be obtained by involving these other countries , particularly in relation to the financial obligations that would be involved and the risk or results of fragmentation which would be diminished.
7. It has also, in favour of a Grand Lodge of the Caribbean , that there are a number of suitable candidates within the Eastern Caribbean for being a Grand Master of a wider Caribbean Grand Lodge than that at present being proposed, who should be beyond reproach (and a number of such persons have been identified), who should not be involved in a day to day functions and should be appointed for life after great care has been taken in his selection. The day to day responsibilities would be carried out by a Pro Grand Master, supported by a full time, trained Secretariat which is properly remunerated.

Establishing a Grand Lodge is Serious Business

It is agreed by all concerned that the establishment of a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean is an irreversible (but not necessarily cataclysmic) change of such proportions that the voice of every mason ought to be heard, especially the younger masons (who have been defined as those under 55), and that if and when the time comes, constitutionally, every vote of every mason in the Eastern Caribbean will be counted.

Further, that in order to win the support of the rank and file for the formation of a Grand Lodge it ought to be fully debated within the lodges, of each island and in the region generally, ensuring that the opinions of younger masons are allowed to be aired.

As such it will not and cannot be embarked upon without good reason, lightly or in haste but that before embarking on any such course it should be weighed very carefully along with the costs and the benefits of doing so.

Do the Circumstances Exist for Forming a Grand Lodge?

It has been suggested that on the whole the circumstances or conditions for embarking on such major changes, as the establishment of a Grand Lodge within the Eastern Caribbean to regulate the craft within the region, do not exist. That the existing relationship with the UK Grand Lodges is not so burdensome or onerous or bad as to require any drastic change such as the establishment of a Grand Lodge.

This argument is understandable as masonry is by its nature conservative. We are all pledged to preserve the landmarks of the Order. We value the things we do because it has always been done like that. We, at every turn, are discouraged from changing anything and to resist change because change in itself is viewed as a bad thing and the maintenance of tradition is viewed as a good thing.

But, it is now suggested, that the major change that has taken place in the relationship between UGLE or the Grand Lodge of Scotland and the Eastern Caribbean; is not a change brought about by these supervising bodies or a change emanating from outside, which has changed the condition or relationship under which we in the Caribbean are operating with them to which we have to adopt or respond.

It is suggested that the main change that has occurred, is within us.

It might be argued that we have come to recognize, to quote the Bard, that “the fault ...is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings”. That it is not that the arrangement or association with the external Grand Lodges has become more burdensome or onerous by reason of their behavior but that these bodies have outlived their usefulness and purpose, and continue only to prevent our own development as a people.

It is now suggested here that a true understanding of the change that has occurred over time is by asking ourselves whether the time has not now arrived when Masons of the region have the will and the self confidence to take over the Masonic affairs and future of the Craft within the Eastern Caribbean.

The answer to this question involves correctly assessing whether Masons in the Eastern Caribbean have a similar desire for independence, sovereignty and control over their Masonic lives that ordinary citizens had in the 20th century that led in the early 1960s, for the drive for decolonization and political independence.

It is therefore now suggested that if one looks at it from this perspective, and that the answer to the question is in the affirmative, then the change that has occurred, in the context of the present governance of Freemasonry in the Eastern Caribbean, may be such that the benefits or advantages of association with the UK Grand Lodges will no longer make the continued association sustainable: simply because they will not satisfy our hunger to be the masters of our own destiny.

In this context the question is therefore no longer, can a new Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean offer to prospective member lodges anything which is comparable to, or better than, what is presently available to them through the UK Grand Lodges? Because if we have the self confidence to run our own Grand Lodge for ourselves the cost to us of the continued association involves an incalculable loss to our self esteem. As such, the continued regulatory association between the British Grand Lodges and the Eastern Caribbean Lodges under the several constitutions would be considered detrimental to the

Masonic well-being of the members of the lodges which could only be improved by establishing a new Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean to be formed.

Do we have the ability to manage a Grand Lodge?

I have, in my previous “Case for a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean” noted the presence of many members of our fraternity in their daily, working and ordinary lives managing businesses and entities at the highest level across the region. This has been occurring for some time past.

We have been effectively leading the political, business, economic, legal and cultural affairs of our various countries in the Caribbean, at the highest levels.

It cannot therefore with any plausibility be said that we are not ready to plan, establish and run a Grand Lodge?

Start Up Expenses and Costs of a Grand Lodge

Of critical importance is the start-up expenses in planning for, furnishing and establishing a suitable Secretariat, and planning for and establishing the possible capital cost of a building to house it, as well as emoluments for staff, which will be a serious financial obligation on the lodges comprising the new Eastern Caribbean Grand Lodge. As has been noted, a very thorough cost analysis of the whole project should be done before any commitment is made to form a new Grand Lodge.

It has also been suggested that we should explore the possibility of putting together a more comprehensive proposal for a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean involving other territories such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, to take advantage of economies of scale. This suggestion cannot be faulted, but we should always remember that we can control our own behavior and the pace at which we can move things forward among ourselves, but we cannot control the behavior of others and the pace at which they can move.

Therefore that we should welcome these other territories insofar that they are ready, willing and able to join us as we move forward with the present proposal, but that we should not stop our present discussion and impetus to accommodate them if it is found that we have a viable incipient Grand Lodge in formulation.

Do we have Sufficient Lodges to start a Grand Lodge?

It has been suggested that even if all the English lodges within the District Grand Lodge of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean agreed to join the new Grand Lodge being proposed, the number of lodges comprising the New Grand Lodge may not be sufficient to make the Grand Lodge prestigious and viable and comparable to the number of lodges in other prestigious and functioning Grand Lodges currently in operation. However, if the Scottish lodges agreed to form part of the new Grand Lodge, the numbers, prestige and viability of the Grand Lodge would be improved and that the situation may be entirely different.

If we assume that all the Lodges in Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands (including Dominica and St. Christopher) decided to form a Grand Lodge we would be dealing with eleven (11) countries and twenty seven (27) Lodges. This would involve three (3) in the Virgin Islands, six (6) in

the Leeward Islands, six (6) in the Windward Islands and twelve (12) in Barbados. This kind of number would easily create a feasible Grand Lodge and there are many successful Grand Lodges in existence with numbers far less than these. The Premier Grand Lodge in England started with just four.

The Need for Constructive Cooperation on Matters

The above remarks apply equally to Masons of the region having the requisite maturity, skill and experience to cooperate to put together the business and organisational plan for the Eastern Caribbean Grand Lodge.

We will need to create out of the essentially two different Constitutions, by merger (with possibly differing though not conflicting or incompatible Constitutions, Cultures, traditions and protocols) the creation of something entirely new and “Caribbean” by dealing with a wide range of issues including those relating to our relationship with other Orders outside the craft (i.e Royal Arch and Mark degrees). We will have to establish the other requirements of a Grand Lodge (Coat of arms, Banner, Regalia and Rituals) in a way that meets the specific requirements of our Eastern Caribbean Grand Lodge. We will also have to cooperate together in the identification and electing of a suitable Grand Master who would command the respect of a wide cross section of the region across traditional constitutional lines. Constructive cooperation, and a willingness to compromise and arrive at a consensus, will therefore have to be the main requirement.

Name of the Grand Lodge

Certainly the need for co-operation will not be easy as we have to rise above the regionalism and insularity which it is claimed is one of the real and practical hurdles or impediments to us successfully establishing a prestigious Eastern Caribbean Grand Lodge.

As has been noted, an important and potentially contentious issue could be the name of the proposed Eastern Caribbean Grand Lodge and whether the exclusion of “Barbados” from the proposed name of the Grand Lodge would be a sticking point for Masons in the southern and northern extremity of the Eastern Caribbean Islands. This will clearly require freemasons not only to put aside regional identifications and partialities but to co-operate fully in the true spirit of masonry to achieve the objective that hopefully we will all agree upon, namely the establishment of a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean.

Headquarters of the Grand Lodge

Another potentially contentious issue and anticipated difficulty, is agreeing on where to locate the headquarters of the proposed Eastern Caribbean Grand Lodge.

We have to co-operate and rise above the regionalism and insularity which it is claimed will stultify our best efforts to establish a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean as we consider the difficult question as to the seat of the proposed Grand Lodge by confronting the obvious fact that Barbados and its Salters Complex (in every way a Masonic Temple fit for a Grand Lodge) may in every way be the most suitable place as the focal point and administrative centre for the Grand Lodge, but may arouse in the territories, feelings of being marginalised.

We may feel instinctively that Barbados should not be accorded this distinction but a headquarters will have to be established somewhere. The detractors point to the experience of the English Constitution in recent years when instituting changes in jurisdictional administration in the District of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, which were met with hostility arising from the perceptions of Masons in the Northern Territories.

It may be that a second Masonic Temple in the Northern territories comparable to Salters, to carry some of the functions or administrative load (such as a Museum and archiving or accounting) and managing of an Eastern Caribbean Grand Lodge, may be a resolution to any perceived imbalance which may be created, but that would not deal with the immediate undoubted fact that Salters is the obvious location at present to house a Grand Lodge.

Protest by Non-Participation: by Experienced Masons in the Grand Lodge?

Non-participation in the establishment of a Grand Lodge by the soothsayers of doom and of those who say we in the Caribbean lack the expertise and experience in areas of control and administration of a Grand Lodge, especially by persons with expertise and experience in management, and of Grand Officers, would in effect be casting the fledgling Grand Lodge adrift, on our own and cut off from the benefit of their expertise and experience thereby creating and leaving us to the fate they predict: a very uncertain and pessimistic future with no option of turning back.

It is therefore incumbent on all masons, if the majority votes for the establishment of a Grand Lodge, to throw their weight behind this fledgling Grand Lodge and so guarantee it the best chance of success.

What do we do about reluctant recalcitrant Lodges?

It is said that despite our best efforts it is unlikely that all such lodges under all three Constitutions will agree to relinquish their ties to their present Grand Lodges which can offer more to these lodges than a fledgling Grand Lodge can offer; and so the numbers will be quite small.

As a example of the reluctance to join the proposed Grand Lodge it has been suggested that the surrender of Warrants and Centenary Certificates by old lodges, if they wished to join a new Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean, would entail for vintage lodges the end of a long line of unbroken history with the UK Grand Lodges to which they are attached (for example in the case of Albion nearly 220 years) resulting in a sacrifice and loss of prestige which is enormous and of incalculable and priceless value.

Examples of these vintage lodges are Albion (EC) No. 196, Harmonic (EC) No. 356, Mount Olive (SC) No. 336, St. Johns (EC) No. 492, Lodge Scotia (SC) No. 340, Victoria Lodge (EC) No. 2196, St. Michael's Lodge (EC) No. 2253 and Lodge Thistle (SC) No. 1014,

It is interesting that the same persons who say that antique lodges will, and by implication, ought to be reluctant to join a new Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean, also say somewhat confusingly, that we would lose 'the personal and spiritual essence to Masonry that is indefinable and incomparable' if we sever our ties by forming a local Grand Lodge. They say that by completely severing ourselves from these UK Grand Lodges we are severing ourselves "from that essence of Masonry to be found only in the great Grand Lodges of the UK, the spiritual home of Masonry". The suggestion is that only the UK

Grand Lodges understand the “essence” of Masonry and that as dense children this would be lost to us forever by severing our constitutional ties with them.

This argument is not very flattering to us as a people and as Masons in the Caribbean. It is in fact saying that despite the fact that Masonry has been practiced in the Eastern Caribbean as long as other regions in the UK, at least since the 1730’s, over 270 years, we do not as a people and as masons, understand the “spiritual essence” of Freemasonry. They are saying that we need the continuing connection to the UK Grand Lodges to preserve this essence.

It is not clear whether the peculiar disabilities we in the Caribbean are labouring under is shared by all the many other Grand Lodges that have been formed throughout the four quarters of the Globe, in all the continents of the world; or if it is peculiar to us in the Caribbean, which can only be cured by us remaining tied to our respective UK Grand Lodges.

But if the fact of our long association with these Grand Lodges and long practice of Masonry has not by now informed us of what Freemasonry is about and established our own Caribbean brand of masonry, then all that can be said is that it is time that we inform ourselves and establish our own brand.

So what do we say to these distinguished and antique lodges such as Albion (EC) No. 196, Harmonic (EC) No. 356, Mount Olive (SC) No. 336, St. Johns (EC) No. 492 and Lodge Scotia (SC) No. 340, Victoria Lodge (EC) No. 2196, St. Michael’s Lodge (EC) No. 2253 and Lodge Thistle (SC) No. 1014?

We have to say to these highly distinguished and honourable lodges that the fact of their history, far from being lost, will be preserved forever in the new Grand Lodge by the vintage position they will occupy in the new Grand Lodge to be formed, and that the early numbers in the new Grand Lodge will be reserved for them as a right. Thus Albion for example will become Albion (ECC) No. 1 in the Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean, Harmonic (ECC) No. 2, Mount Olive (ECC) No. 3, St. Johns (ECC) No. 4, Lodge Scotia (ECC) No. 5, Victoria Lodge (ECC) No. 6, St. Michael’s Lodge (ECC) No. 7 and Lodge Thistle (ECC) No. 8.

We can only reassure these antique and distinguished lodges that their birth, history and continuous existence would not change by surrendering their warrants. These are matters of historical facts which cannot be erased by the surrender of warrants but will be transmitted to their successors under any new Grand Lodge, pure and unsullied as they have them at present.

Will the Grand Lodge Tolerate Diversity of Workings?

The separate but analogous question which has been raised for the older lodges, especially those with distinctive workings, for not joining a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean, is that these workings would not be tolerated under a new Grand Lodge to be formed. It is suggested that they would be required to conform to an agreed upon ‘Ritual’ and not permitted to continue to practice the Landmarks of their individual lodges.

This is something that will have to be addressed within the Constitution and Regulations of the Grand Lodge to be established. But clearly recognition will have to be given to the workings of antique lodges and those with distinctive ritual practices in accordance with their individual landmarks. Diversity of Masonic practice will obviously be guaranteed to these lodges to secure their willing participation and co-operation.

Thus if all the lodges, under all three Constitutions agree to relinquish their ties to their present Grand Lodges, far from a diminution in the prestige of these vintage lodges, they will in fact be increasing their prestige while increasing the prestige of the fledgling Grand Lodge with a corresponding increase in the viability of the proposed Grand Lodge and the vitality of freemasonry of the region.

Their presence would ensure the success, importance and prestige of the new Caribbean Grand Lodge.

Rank under the Grand Lodge?

It has been suggested that 'Rank', particularly 'District Rank' and 'Grand Rank' and promotions generally would not be considered as valuable to the participating brethren of the proposed Grand Lodge especially because of the inevitable, as suggested, numerical increase in appointments and promotions that would result in the first instance to get the Grand Lodge established. That in addition obvious unfavourable comparison will be made in such appointments and promotions to the more prestigious UK Grand Lodges from whence we came.

This of course would not be the case if all existing Grand Officers become grand officers under any Grand Lodge to be established. This should and would be written into the Constitution of the new Grand Lodge. In which event how could such an exchange be viewed as a devaluation?

So the presence of existing Grand Officers under the UK Grand Lodges would and should be essential to the importance, prestige and success of any proposed Grand Lodge. Similar to the presence of antique lodges within the proposed Grand Lodge these officers will similarly bolster the 'prestige' and 'importance' of a new Grand Lodge and by them lending their experience, understanding and spirit of Caribbean Masonry to the ranking system to be established.

But certainly, it must be admitted, the position of existing "Grand Officers" under UK Grand Lodges could be used to deliberately undermine the ranking system of the proposed Grand Lodge by such Grand Officers under the UK Grand Lodges refusing to accept Grand Rank under any established Grand Lodge of the Caribbean.

By not participating in the Grand Ranking system under the Grand Rank to be established, their non-participation could be viewed as deliberate undermining or sabotaging of the wishes and efforts of the majority of the masons in the Caribbean (if they voted to establish a Grand Lodge). It could be viewed as an attempt to fulfill the outcome they are prophesying by attempting, no less, to frustrate the establishment of a viable and prestigious Grand Lodge being established, by diminishing its status and thereby make its viability uncertain.

The question therefore has been asked what would be the status of holders of Grand Rank or Honorary Grand Rank or District Grand Rank of freemasons who do not wish to accept the Grand or District Grand Rank they have been granted under the proposed Grand Lodge which they have held under their previous constitutions? Will holders of Grand Rank, for example, be permitted to continue to wear their expensive regalia which they already have bought? It was admitted that these may be considered minor difficulties which can be taken care of when writing the Constitution of the new Grand Lodge. No doubt this will be done.

Certainly the point has been raised as a difficulty which may arise, and reassurances need to and will be given that no reprisals will attend non acceptance or non participation in the proposed Grand Lodge.

Recognition

The question of recognition has been raised as an argument for pausing before embarking on establishing a Grand Lodge. It has not seriously been suggested that there is room for questioning the possible conformity of the proposed Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean to the basic principles for recognition by the UK Grand Lodges. Nor has it been suggested that the other recognized Grand Lodges of the region, such as The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Caribbean and Jurisdiction, The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Bahamas; The Grand Lodge of Cuba, The Grand Lodge of Dominican Republic, and, The Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico. would not be prepared to sponsor, much less 'Recognise' the formation of a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean.

Doubts and Fears?

A further anticipated difficulty is whether we have the maturity and organisational skills to manage the process of identifying and electing a suitable Grand Master and the other leaders of the Grand Lodge who would command the respect of a wide cross section of the community.

The soothsayers point to past experience of establishing and maintaining organizations in the Caribbean to date that has not been good and cannot be ignored. They claim that appointments to executive positions are at times subject to political and other expedient qualifications which do not transform into capable leadership with the consequent result of bad management and administration.

Even if this is generally admitted, this does not translate necessarily to the operations of fraternal organizations such as freemasons.

It has been pointed out from among those who are against the existing proposal for the formation of a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean that we have a number of suitable candidates within the Eastern Caribbean for Grand Master, persons beyond reproach who are eminently qualified to fill the position, we just have to iron out the mechanisms and Constitutional framework for the election process. Once this is done the responsibility will be ours to ensure that we make a suitable selection, a responsibility which, it is suggested, should be reposed where it belongs.

Indigenous Grand Lodges exist within the region and there has been no such suggestion of incapable leaders being elected and of such Grand Lodges being mismanaged and mal-administered. In any event, we in the Caribbean have in fact been managing our Districts for a long time and no such charge has been made against us. In fact it may well provide an opportunity for freemasonry to blaze a path of competence for the wider Caribbean public.

Of course there will be dissenters and soothsayers of doom out to discourage and dishearten brethren about the prospects of successfully establishing a prestigious Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean. But we need to confront them with our own self confidence, a resolve to prove them wrong, and a willingness to put in the necessary hard work to establish, on the proper footing, the proposed Grand Lodge.

So it would appear, as has often been stated by the District Grand Master, the only thing standing in the way of establishing a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean is fear itself.

Conclusion

The case for a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean is to be found in the above answers to the many objections to the formation of a Grand Lodge of the Eastern Caribbean.

As has been observed by the Right Worshipful District Grand Master of Trinidad and Tobago W. Bro Stanley I. Marcus:

Regionally, when opportunities arise for us to interface and fraternize, a spirit of fellowship, cordiality and true brotherhood pervades the atmosphere. I do not hesitate to say that in my Masonic travels, and they have been many, I have not experienced the same heightened atmosphere as when we meet regionally. I believe that therein lies the manifestation of our readiness to combine in that desirable homogeneous whole.

As I have previously stated the fact that we share not only a geographic region but also a common history that binds us together, allows us to all speak of ourselves as being Caribbean people, without doing violence to our rich cultural diversity, all sharing a common destiny. Our interests have also been shared in relation to the British and our colonial history, as evidenced by our simultaneous and collective political demand for independence from the British in the 1950s and 1960s. This is also true in relation to our Masonic lives, as, despite our different constitutional backgrounds, we are all, and have always undoubtedly actually been engaged with each other masonically, and are, and have always been administratively grouped together.

This is evidenced by the operation of the Masonic Provident Society of the Eastern Caribbean, the largely harmonious operation of the English District of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, the joint ownership of a Masonic building in Bridgetown by the English Lodge Albion, the Scottish Lodge Scotia and Scotia Royal Arch Chapter since the 19th century and the joint building at Salters in Barbados of a Masonic Building fit for a Grand Lodge.

As a people, we in the Caribbean have to take responsibility for our lives, including our Masonic lives.

The case for a Grand Lodge is about Sovereignty.

It is not good for our self confidence as a people, to go on believing that we don't have the ability to manage our affairs.

It is not good for our children, to be told that we prefer others to make important decisions for us about how we live masonically because we do not trust in our own ability to make these decisions for ourselves.

It is not good for us to be telling our grandchildren, that we are bequeathing to them powerlessness over their Masonic destiny.

For us not to be placed in this embarrassing position, we have to take into our own hands, and hand to our children and grandchildren, the responsibility for defining our own Masonic identity and our own destiny.

It is good for us to be involved with masonic work in the Lodge and to get a good feeling about managing the offices of our own lodges, which we do very well.

It is also good that we get involved at the District level, and receive District honours, and that we are involved in the business of managing the District affairs, again which we do successfully and well

But how many of us are engaged in the edifying and exciting business of making ultimate decisions about the directions that the craft that we love, should take.

How many of us, even Grand Officers, are involved in the decision making of these ultimate decisions, I say absolutely none.

We do not even have the hope or the aspiration of achieving these.

None of us will ever be the Grand Master of UGLE, or indeed even hold an active position within UGLE, and worse yet, even have a say in the important decisions that UGLE makes; not even our own District Grand Master.

We are mere passive supplicants, entirely at the mercy of The United Grand Lodge of England.

NOTES

¹ See

² Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British imperialism, 1717-1927 by Jessica L. Harland-Jacobs published by The University of North Carolina Press 2007 See page 24.

³ Ibid Pages 32 to 37.

⁴ Ibid. Page 39.

⁵ Ibid. page 39.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ A Short History of Slavery by James Walvin, Published by Penguin Books 2007, at Page 55.

⁸ Ibid Page 51 and 52.

⁹ After reduced in 1792 to No. 370.

¹⁰ Ibid Pages 51-55.

¹¹ See Freemasonry in Barbados page 62 and Resume of the History of the District Grand Lodge of Barbados 1740-1936. page 32.

¹² Freemasonry in Barbados, 1740-1900: Issues of Ethnicity and Class in a Colonial Polity by Aviston Downes at page 58 of The Journal of the Barbados Museum & Historical Society (Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade) 1807 – 2007.

¹³ Mackey's Jurisprudence of Freemasonry Revised by Robert Clegg and Louis B. Blakemore 1980.

¹⁴ See Note 26 above

¹⁵ Caribbean Constitutional Reform: Rethinking the West Indian Polity by professor Simeon C. R. McIntosh Page 23.