

Dr. Jean Behar, President of Lions International, returned to the Texas Lions Camp over the weekend of August 3rd and 4th. Dr. Behar had previously visited the camp and the previous council of governors during his campaign for the office of second vice president in 1997.

Dr. Behar arrived in San Antonio on Friday morning and was greeted by a delegation of Lions who had made plans for him to visit the Sight Foundation prior to bring him to the Camp at Kerrville. During his visit he had meetings with the Texas International family which included ID C. Connie de la Garza, PIP Everett "Ebb" Grindstaff, PID's Jimmy Ross, Marshall Cooper, Ray Hughston, C. Howard Leverett, M. P. "Mike" Butler, Edwin H. Flood and Don Buckalew. He also attended a luncheon with the Council of Governors, vice-governors and international family.

His itinerary included visiting the Camp's new facilities and attending the Camp President's annual Bar-B-cue Friday evening in the new covered pavilions located in the picnic area. While the new trees were slowly growing it was nice to have shade provided by the new dining areas under roof.

On Saturday evening President Behar was the key note speaker at the Past District Governors Association annual banquet and spoke from the following text.

Quality - Key to the Future

"The day I became a charter member of my club, Le Havre Expansion, I could not imagine that one day I would become international president of the association. That day was a day of great emotion, enthusiasm and friendship. You can easily imagine the emotion I feel upon taking my oath of office.

Be sure that I recognize this great responsibility. As I assume my duties, I know that it is an immense honor to become president of Lions Clubs International. I promise that I shall give my best to successfully promote the objectives of our association.

Fellow Lions, we are the first generation of Lions who will serve in the 21st Century. This is a crucial period of our association, a period when we have to take a fresh look and, perhaps, introduce some adjustments.

In 1917, the message of our founder was inspirational. Melvin Jones taught us that with generosity and compassion it is possible to achieve more and with better results than with selfishness and an attitude closed to others.

The value of this message was so strong that it insured the success of Lions Clubs International. Beginning with less than 30 clubs in 1917 we have, in a few decades, grown to approximately 45,000 clubs in the year 2000. Today we are active in 185 nations. Every day, our more than 1.4 million members serve our communities and beyond, inspired by the values of our Objects and Ethics. More than statistics, we have to be proud of the extraordinary accomplishments of Lions. Our predecessors built a strong image of quality that has grown to be appreciated worldwide.

Certainly we are happy and proud to be Lions, but we must be aware that Lions Clubs International is currently in a paradoxical situation. Our services have never been so well known, and our image never so appreciated, but at the same time we must recognize that we have lost some of our attractiveness, especially for the younger and most active men and women of our communities.

We are experiencing some difficulties in our membership. Even if our losses are small relative to our worldwide membership, we know that in some areas they are more significant. Members are our lifeblood, the singular strength of our clubs. A loss of membership is a very serious occurrence, because it represents a loss of effectiveness. It is obvious that the more we are, the more we can do.

We no longer live in the same type of society that we had previously. We are experiencing a weakening of the old values on which our social life depended and our contemporaries are seeking new values.

These changes demand appropriate responses, responses that take into account current circumstances and employ modern approaches to answer crucial needs. Let's face it, our association has not really changed much since its beginning. The most important change of course was decided in Taipei in 1987 when the Lions voted to invite women as full members of Lions clubs. Where would we be today and tomorrow if we had not adopted this positive change?

The natural tendency of everyone is to resist change. Today, however, at the beginning of a new century of service, we have to accept some changes. To realize effective and successful changes, I propose to rely on one unique concept, the concept of Quality. My slogan, therefore, will **be "Quality: The Key to the Future."** The letter "Q" is shaped like a heart in keeping with the motivation of Lions. I wish that every person, project, statement and strategy coming from Lions will be inspired by a strong will for Quality and will be considered as such in all our communities.

Let us inscribe the notion of Quality in all-important matters of the association. First, of course, is our membership. Membership growth is dependent on three possible strategies: recruitment of new members in existing clubs, extension by the creation of new clubs and membership retention. The application of these programs can vary in respect to cultures and habits in a given location, but each of these strategies should be inspired by the notion of Quality, particularly:

Exclusive recruitment of quality members. Quality leadership programs to train quality leaders at all levels. Quality public relations to build an image of quality. This global strategy presumes good members, with effective leaders at all levels and a positive image, will establish dynamic, dedicated and effective clubs, clubs in which the members want to remain and in which others wish to be invited. We should forget the numbers and be confident that quality will bring about the results we desire.

However a question must be raised: What is a quality member? Is it a member who is used to paying the dues or attending meetings? Actually, we wish more than that. I have defined ten elementary skills to help us evaluate if a person will be a quality member; three of them are essential:

- **Motivation:** We need men or women having a desire to do something; not merely names on a list.
- An irreproachable **morality:** Indispensable for the image and the moral stature of the club.
- **Talent:** Men and women who have demonstrated in their social, professional, civic or family life; therefore, bringing their skills to the club.

In order to be in contact with quality men and women of the community, I encourage all Lions clubs worldwide to organize, at the beginning of March, a "Lions Clubs Friendship Day." This will be an excellent opportunity to be in touch with good people, and at the same time initiate a quality public relations event.

Leos are vital to the membership of our association, especially those in the Omega option, 18 to 28 years of age. They are members of the Lions family and are as dedicated as we, but when leaving their Leo clubs they do not join the Lions. Why? Perhaps it is due to socio-economic problems. I believe, however, it is mainly because they wish to socialize, to have fun and to serve with people their own age. They do not wish to join, as they see it, a group of older persons.

In order to attract the outgoing Leos and other young people of the community I have proposed and the board has adopted a new pilot program, **the New Century Lions Club**. These Lions clubs will be reserved exclusively for young adults. When created, they will have some specific requirements during a period of seven years, at the end of which they will automatically become regular Lions clubs. During their period as New Century Lions Club, the main thing is that they will be allowed to exclusively invite members, men or women, who will be less than 35 years old at the time of their induction.

Obviously humanitarian programs are our main objectives, as we strive to put into concrete action our "We Serve" motto. Each club and district, upon discussing a new project, should avoid the same routine and attend to new needs of society. We know that worldwide today there are street children, drug addicts, injured children, refugees, developing nations...unfortunately the list is very long. In addition, we must not forget that we have a tremendous humanitarian tool, our great foundation, LCIF. We shall try to make it better known and loved by all Lions throughout the world.

The mission of the association goes beyond humanitarian objectives, involving Lions in cultural, educational, civic and environmental projects.

In a world of intense exchanges, as ours has become, quality communication is essential. We have to profit from the computer technology, which will be able to give us thorough, instantaneous, easy and cost effective communications. Some important initiatives have already been taken in this field. It is now possible to circulate the monthly membership forms through the Web to as many recipients as desired, for little cost. The annual activity report will allow us to approach a totalization of all activities undertaken by the clubs and districts. These figures will be impressive and will serve as a tremendous PR tool. We always say that we are the most active voluntary humanitarian organization in the world. Very soon we shall be able to prove it.

In addition we know that men and women today are different. They no longer accept the view that the correct solution to a situation always emanates exclusively from the top. They want to be taken into consideration in this decision-making process just as they are with their various cultures and habits. It is probably not the best idea to send the same notices simply translated to Lions in Japan, Scandinavia, Latin America or elsewhere. The implementation of cultural adaptation of the texts and programs is currently under study and is relying strongly on the assistance of multiple districts, which most often have quality cultural coherence. Some material has already been rewritten at International Headquarters to be more friendly and flexible, thus making easy adaptation possible.

Fellow Lions, I told you that we are facing some problems despite our immense successes. Nonetheless, I must add that I am extremely confident for the future of Lions Clubs International.

Society needs us as we move into the new millennium. Even in the most sophisticated nations needs are apparent for individuals, usually volunteers who represent civil society, to take humanitarian action and fill the gap between governmental agencies and the people. Our founders bequeathed to us tremendous assets, our Objects are large and generous and our Code of Ethics has an invaluable moral standard. Furthermore, recruitment by invitation allows us to choose our members carefully with our own criteria of Quality. We can walk with our heads held high knowing we are men and women free to demonstrate the spirit of volunteerism and benevolence.

We just need to be ambitious, to have a strong will and a certain imagination, and to be open enough to accept some changes. I know we will make our great association still more relevant to the thinking and ways of life of men and women in our communities worldwide. This will be our ***key to the future.***"