

ROTARY ZONE INSTITUTE HANNOVER 2010

Less bureaucrazy with Rotary, keep Rotary simple!

By Carlo RAVIZZA

R.I.PRESIDENT 1999/2000 = T.R.F. CHAIRMAN 2004 / 2005

Let me recognize first of all a fine couple of dear friends of Rossana and mine, the R.I.President Elect Kalyan Banerjee and his lovely First Lady to be, Binota.

President Elect Banerjee's involvement in the successful Polio campaign in India was and is essential as also his support as a Trustee for restarting a healthy Foundation in his country during my term as Foundation Chairman.

Thank you again of honoring this Institute with your presence.

I wish to extend also a very special thank you to the Senior Convener of this Institute, Director Ekkehard Pandel, for his highly appreciated decision to give Rotarians from RIBI, I specially welcome, and Rotarians from one part of Europe , a great opportunity to express an European point of view on Rotary's problems in this changing world.

I thank him also to allow me, as one of the two Continental European Past R.I.Presidents, to make some short remarks as a contribution to your discussions.

I am absolutely convinced that here , inspired by the visit of our founder Paul Harris in Hannover during his stay in Europe, we will work together for the benefit of a challenging greater future of our organization.

“Keep Rotary simple” was the presidential theme of R.I. President 1956/57 Paolo Lang from Italy , the first President out of seven Continental European Presidents after World War Two, in addition to 3 from RIBI.

He considered bureaucrazy the appreciated work of the Rotary paid staff , but with its tendency to prevail in the Board's activities.

You realize now that bureaucrazy in Rotary was a major concern also 53 years ago having President Lang to ask for more simplicity and less bureaucracy.

The term bureaucrazy is generally defined as the result of running an organization with own authority, to many employes, to many not user friendly rules and with an unnecessary amount of paperwork with poor flexibility.

The members of a Rotary Club should represent a cross section of their community , as such they experience the changes in society and how they impact Rotary today, in an environment of a daily increasing speed in modern information and communication technologies and decreasing moral and ethical values.

Let us take a look on the basic changes in Rotary in one of our most sensitive area: membership trends.

In the last five years we had a worldwide total net gain of only 3.266 members, that means an increase by 0.35 %.

An alarming signal.

More, in each of the last 7 consecutive years North America experienced a net loss totaling 39.939 members, exactly 10 % of its membership.

This loss has nothing to do with the current financial crisis. It happened in spite of 8 multidistrict membership conferences, preaching with a bureaucratic approach, to increase membership by fixing totally unrealistic yearly goals, hurting in this way also the credibility of some of our leadership. Quantity instead of quality, with the understanding to cover with the new additional per capita dues the increasing costs of our bureaucrazy.

On the other side looking on membership changes we see a booming India, having now the same amount of members like France, Germany and Italy together and still growing like other countries in Asia.

Are you also all aware that in the today's time frame of 5 years we had and have 3 top leaders from Asia: Past President D.K.Lee from South Korea, President Elect Kalyan Banerjee from India and President Nominee Sakusji Tanaka from Japan.

Looking on a global scale today Asia, Continental Europe plus RIBI and North America have roughly the same amount of members.

This new situation underlines how we, at this Institute as European, representing an increasing one third of the worldwide membership, must take a firm stand on all crucial items for the good of the future of our organization.

Most important we must try to simplify the relationship between our centralized bureaucrazy and the Districts and Clubs, starting in giving more operational authority to District Governors and flexibility to the Clubs .

I also firmly believe that time has come to work more stronger

together and to have one voice for Europe, a Europe between an American constantly decreasing presence and a booming Asian one.

Let us consider now some other significant figures: In 1986, a milestone year, I was honored as Vice President to present for approval at the Council on Legislation in Chicago our first corporate project "Polio 2005", to vaccinate the children against polio, but we celebrated also our first 1 million Rotarian, a Frenchman.

The Board fixed a goal to reach an increase of 100 %, totaling 2 milion members within our centennial year.

Sadly we reached only an increase of a poor 22 %.

Astonishing in the same period our bureaucrazy seems to have been increased by 80 %, from 405 to 741 employes, keeping in mind that the International Service Centers , like Zuerich and the 6 others, were increased only by 11 people.

I think it is time to take a look how this increase of bureaucrazy happened and if it is justified and organized for an efficient working process and concious of its limits of action.

Allow me to give you one example of what I mean. The day after the Tsunami desaster, Decembre 26, 2004 , I took as Foundation Chairman the decision to act immediately creating a fund I called "Solidarity for South East Asia ". I could reach by phone only 3 general managers in Evanston, the rest was on X mas leave, they opposed strongly, at the end I found out that they had just agreed before on their own to join the action started by the American Red Cross.

I succeeded to reach the President who shared my action to move the funds through our Rotary Foundation.

Having told you this experience I suggest doing exactly what I did six months before starting as Foundation Chairman in 2004.

I asked to hire a consultant company to study the working process in the Foundation area.

After 4 months a 63 pages report was delivered expressing high respect for the quality of the staff and their working capability, but suggesting to close immediately the operations because of a totally wrong bureaucratic not user friendly approach and a not effective working process.

This dramatic situation inspired me with my board of Trustees to start a basic new approach: the Foundation Future Vision program, trying to simplify and turning more responsibilities and flexibility down to the district and club level, away from our centralized and bureaucratic system.

In essence : allow more project locally, reduce number of programs, projects only of a bigger size for easier expense control and more visibility.

By the way as Foundaion Chair I was lucky and proud to have 2 great leaders as Trustees on my side : future President Ray Klingingsmith and future President Elect Kalyan Banerjee.

Critizising is an easy excercise, proposing basic changes is more difficult but for us today they are a must.

Currently Rotary has a unique chance to change its future : the search, after 10 years, of a new General Secretary to be in charge by July 1.st. 2011 as the leader of our bureaucracy.

This is a unique opportunity for, I hope, a strong Board to impose and secure a new style of corporate managment and working process.

First of all taking into consideration the changes in the membership

composition and trends in the Rotary world, starting to think and act with a more international mindset, also if our headquarter will still remain in the States.

The choice of the right man is of dramatic importance for our future, much more then in the past. Consider that since I was Governor in 77/78 I experienced 8 General Secretaries and I was involved in 3 search procedures for new ones.

The current General Secretary Ed Futa operating now for ten years, was hired as a responsible manager for strategic planing, one year later he was upgraded by my Board to General Secretary because of an emergency issue.

With his background I started as President the first strategic planing committee with the goal to have a longterm strategic guideline for the future of our organization.

The result was dramatically clear : no strategy is possible because of the lack of consistency and continuity at the leadership level and recognizing the bureaucratic led staff as the decisions imposing body.

Since a few years there is another urgent need: the Board must take stronger control over bureaucrazy, this is only possible with more continuity and stability in the decision making process.

For the moment we can not change the one year turnover of the Presidency, but at least we must increase to 3 years instead of 2 the term of office of the Directors in order to avoid the dreadful yearly change of 50 % of the Board assuring consistency by the well experienced , continuing two third of members .

An example are the Trustees of the Rotary Foundation with a term of office of 4 years with a lot of home work to do and high financial responsibilities.

Every leading position in Rotary means a sacrifice of time and

money, it must be seen as an honor to serve, I would discourage the many social climbers.

The other most crucial point to rethink today also is the relationships between Rotary International, the bureaucracy and The Rotary Foundation as a separate corporate.

Let me tell you now with great humility some turning points of my long, engaged, extensive Rotary life in order I hope you will realize that I had the unique privilege of understanding in all details how our organization is working and its weaknesses, how Rotary is evolving, how it is respected around the globe and the need of changes to improve our performances to secure our future.

Here some of my points:

“proud to be 40 years in Rotary = District Governor 77/78 with the highest contribution to the Rotary Foundation of all Europe = attended 30 International Assemblies, I have registered also for the next in San Diego, = 7 Councils on Legislation= 29 Conventions = awarded with the International Service Award for a World free of Polio.”.

With this unique experiences, my devotion to serve Rotary, my integrity and the wisdom of my age I will try to propose you some ideas for your thoughts, to stimulate debates and future actions for a more efficient Rotary we need to survive as the number one service organization in the world assuring you also my assistance, if needed, during this Institute.

Here some thoughts:

= full exclusive authority to Governors to close or merge Clubs in order to gain new respect in the community to attract new quality members.

= reduce the increasing number of committees at all levels. The 3 year staggered term is excellent but many times they appear to

exercise more authority in the district compared to the one year term of the District Governor.

=in Europe we have to compete against too many organizations attracting the young generations and professionals who prefer hands-on projects or effective business networking. We must be more flexible, creative and adapt locally. New ideas to attract quality members ?

= should there be in all countries a Multidistrict Administrative Group? Should the rules be unified ? What is the experience of the many entities approved and operating in Europe ?

Now my friends , in this very critical and challenging time, let us start from here with our courage and competence, with our mind and heart, united and not divided, with new strength and believe , with great hopes and commitment to work for a bigger, better and bolder Rotary acting with consistency, credibility and continuity.

As Rotarians let's fly high, but keeping a low profile.!!! Thank you