



Challenge of the Seventies

Excerpts from the Inaugural Address
of Int. Pres. W. R. Bryan
at the 52nd International Convention.

WE ARE JUST CONCLUDING a most successful year of Lionism. Under the leadership of President David A. Evans, we have grown in membership to exceed 906,579 members. We have established a new record for new club organization-1,327 new clubs! And yet, President Evans would be the first to agree that our challenge for the year 1969-70 must simply be this: to make this year the greatest in the history of the Association.

During this year, we shall see the end of the "Sizzling Sixties" and enter the decade of the "Sensational Seventies." Everyone is predicting that this coming decade will bring even faster change than the one about to pass. The man on the moon is only a forerunner of intensified interplanetary travel. The population explosion, the technological revolution, the computer age, the supersonic jet, the expanding worldwide markets-all these and more are offset by wars, by threats of war, by starvation, by want and by social and political upheavals. Youth-the leaders of tomorrow-are wondering, questioning. . . some are even rebellious. Never has the need for an international service club been greater. Never have the opportunities to serve our fellow men been more challenging!

To meet this challenge, we have adopted a general theme for the year, "*Unite Mankind through Lionism.*"

Utopian? A dream? Certainly, it is utopian; surely, it is a dream. And yet, my friends, it is not the impossible dream. It is a necessary one!

Walk, as I did, through the museum at Hiroshima. See the fused glass, the twisted steel, the pictures of human suffering, the holocaust as a result of man's inhumanity to man.

Lay a wreath, as I did, at the Peace Memorial in that historic shrine. Listen to the reading of the inscription thereon, "May they rest in peace. May we never repeat our mistake again."

Add to that experience one that happened last year. Celia and I landed at an airport in a country torn by civil war. During refueling, the plane was surrounded by soldiers with Tommy guns; an anti-aircraft weapon was trained on that plane during our entire stay. Daily we read the casualty lists of the Vietnam War. We see conflagrations erupting all over the world. Obviously, we have not yet learned our lesson. I submit that anything-however small-we can do to unite mankind is a step in the right direction.

"UNITE MANKIND THROUGH LIONISM."

Ladies and gentlemen, let me suggest two approaches to that theme. . . .

First, never has the need been greater to promote unity in communities at a local level. Racial disturbances, student eruptions, lack of family discipline, decline of religious influences, the needs of youth-all these and more require positive action. Lions clubs can, if they will, provide that action. We can never forget that Lionism at the local level is the real strength of this Association. *Your* Lions club is the most important key to success.

Secondly, never has the need been greater to promote unity of mankind in the entire world. We have progressed beyond the age of nationalism. If for no other reason than survival itself, we must think and act internationally. People everywhere are crying out for a uniting force to bring brotherhood and understanding. Lionism-906,579 strong-can, if it will, exercise a significant impact on person-to-person, nation-to-nation understanding and be a real force for peace.

And now, Lions and ladies, listen to what might have been the last will and testament of one of the really great men of this world, a man who used 52 years of his life span to amass his fortune. Listen well:

One pith helmet

One old felt hat (soiled)

Six short sleeved white shirts

One bow tie (ready made)

Six pairs of white slacks

One pair of shoes; accessory socks and underwear

One old-fashioned straight razor

And, because that man was too modest to include it, let me add the last clause of that will: "and the good will of more than half of the world."

The man, of course, was Albert Schweitzer! Today, his work is being continued by Dr. Walter Munz, the dedicated successor to whom Lions International gave its first Humanitarian Award.

Today, the needs of the Lambourene Hospital are even greater. Such ordinary items as a water pump, plywood for construction, a jeep are necessities, but not available. A new medical pavilion is needed for children. On January 15, 1970, I shall represent your Association at Lambourene to commemorate the anniversary of Albert Schweitzer's death. The Lions of Puerto Rico have already asked me to deliver to Dr. Munz, on their behalf, a check for \$1,000. If there are any clubs or districts who wish to participate in this program, I should be most happy to act as their courier. Please understand that this is not a solicitation. I would, however, be most happy to present any gifts the Lions of the world would care to furnish in memory of that great humanitarian. Certainly, it would provide action to our theme, "Unite Mankind Through Lionism."

And now, let's take a look at the specific objectives for 1969-70.

First, To Achieve a Net Membership Gain of at Least 50,000.

Not a gain just for gain's sake! If we are to meet the service needs of a growing population, we, too, must grow. We must grow with *quality* members. This is a challenging objective. Never in the recent history of the Association have we gone over 38,000 net gain in a year. It can, however, be done. Broken down, it means every club need have only a 5 percent gain. This should be our *minimum* objective.

Secondly, To Expand Lionism by Organizing at Least 1,400 New Clubs.

To achieve that objective our mathematics by District is simple. We must organize one new club for every seventeen now in existence. We know that many of our rapidly growing Districts will far exceed this figure. One for seventeen must be our *minimum* goal.

Thirdly, To Place an Unprecedented Emphasis on Youth, To Promote Youth in Lions Membership.

The average age of our organization is *increasing* at a time when the average age of the world's population is *decreasing*. If we are to continue to meet the needs, we must build for tomorrow:

- Get sons, sons-in-law as members.
- Emphasize the slogan "Get a Man the Same Age You were When You became a Lion."

And this brings us to a major objective in the emphasis on youth. Our objective: to increase the number of Leo clubs by at least 2,300.

Here is our own new youth organization for young men and women between the ages of 15 and 21. Here's our opportunity to bridge the generation gap, our opportunity to provide leadership, education and opportunity, to teach the principles of good citizenship and community service.

Today, we have over 200 clubs in 14 nations; in our second full year, we should really move forward. And, again, what does that goal mean district-wise?

It simply means that we must establish only *one Leo* club for every *ten Lions* clubs now in existence.

It, too, is a practical goal.

I submit that we must:

First, emphasize youth in Leo clubs.

Second, continue the development of Youth Ex-change. We have made much progress in this area in the past years. The challenge is really to get more districts, more nations, involved.

Third, engage ourselves in the promotion of youth camps. Europe and Montgomery, Alabama, have done an outstanding job. The rest of the world of Lionism should take note. Never has there been a better method to promote person-to-person understanding. It's a great opportunity to unite mankind through Lionism. We can supply you with the information necessary-just ask for it.

Finally, we should place special emphasis on youth activities within our clubs. During the year, we shall ask every club to conduct one extra activity, an activity for and with youth.

Think of the impact if every one of our 23,400 clubs would just perform one additional youth activity in its community. Let's ask them to do just that!

Let's look now at a couple more areas of the emphasis on youth.

- Our Lions-Care partnership is long standing. Its results have been far-reaching in promoting international understanding. I have met with CARE officials; they understand the emphasis on youth and are prepared to offer you many youth projects if you but ask.

And, incidentally, Lions-CARE is not just for American clubs. Eighteen nations of Lionism have participated. You can, too.

Our Lions-Youth Organization Partnerships:

- The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Girl Guides
- The Boys Clubs', FFA, Junior Achievement
- Others around the world

They all need assistance. Ask them how the Lions can help!

And now, finally, an emphasis on youth through an International Youth Congress.

At the Convention in Atlantic City in July, 1970, once again we plan to bring together about 100 youth in a congress similar to the one in Dallas in 1968.

There's one special change-the participant must be a Leo Club member.

And now for the fourth and final objective:

To Decrease Membership Loss by 10 Percent.

We have had a membership retention program since 1957, and yet each year our membership loss exceeds 100,000 members. It's time, in my opinion, to take a positive approach, to make a special effort. We are prepared to mail out from the office much literature on the subject of retention. Once again, however, the success depends on you, the club officers and members.

My fellow Lions, these are the objectives of the year 1969-70: *membership Growth, Club Expansion, Emphasis on Youth, Retention.*

And all of it is interwoven into a single theme, a theme that we can utilize at the club level, the district level, the International level.

Let us, as a team, pledge our wholehearted efforts to Unite Mankind Through Lionism.

Taken from the Lion Magazine July/August 1969.

Re-typed by Lion Bill Keller