

Pennsylvania Department

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

Office of the Commander

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(To be read in camps and retained in camp files)

Brothers of the Pennsylvania Department,

In hopes that calmer heads will prevail, I am extending this call for unity. The hostility between the ASUVCW, and the SUVCW is in truth only the hostility between a couple of members of those organization. Likewise within our own Order the anger over several things have been perpetuated by only a very few individuals. The personal conflicts that these people have with one another are being allowed to spread throughout both Orders as each of these people seeks rationalization and personal justification for their personal positions. A few people complain to a few others and soon whole camps are involved in an uproar which they have never had any involvement with in the first place.

While it is human nature to seek support for what each of us wants to believe is right; to promote and spread personal anger and animosity to others who would otherwise not be involved is unfair to them and hurtful to an organization such as ours. We claim to be built on Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty. The G.A.R. was clearly known for having some terrible arguments in meeting sessions, however, it was always understood that once the meeting doors opened, what happened in the meeting room stayed in the meeting room and the "mantle of charity" was to be figuratively placed over the actions of those who angered or upset anyone in the course of the business. The men of the G.A.R. fully understood the importance of Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty if their organization were to survive. Because of this, it did survive and lasted throughout their lives. If those men had lived on, it is no doubt that the G.A.R. would have lived on as well.

Throughout my term I have called regularly for peace and reconciliation between the parties in the Department that would foster and perpetuate anger and hatred between the Orders. To date, many have willingly complied with this call for unity. There is however, a very small and noisy minority that has of late been pursuing divisive actions and hateful accusations to the point of actively recruiting others to join in. This activity is dividing the membership of the Department and damaging the fraternal relations of the Allied Orders.

This kind of intentional division and fostering of anger is a very serious violation of the principals we, as an organization, are founded upon and pledge to obey. In the interest of not furthering the divisions in the Department, and in the interest of keeping the peace, I have until now overlooked much that a less tolerant person would have acted upon.

Therefore, I am placing this general and open call for unity to all Brothers of the PA Department. I am asking that you all stop and think well on what you have been hearing and actually read our Bylaws and our Constitution and Regulations of the Order for yourselves rather than assume that anyone, no matter their tenure with the Order, is correct. Then honestly ask yourselves if they and you are following those principals. Ask yourself if those who call for division and for reprisal against the ladies orders are acting in the fraternal spirit of our organization. It is possible that one misogynistic person might well push a large body of honest and decent men to take a very regrettable and terrible action in their ignorance of the rules and founding of our Order.

To date I have personally and quietly reprimanded those who would make public or formal statements against the ladies organizations. However; these problems continue to occur and are growing in regularity. That personal policy of giving a second chance is now over. From this date forward, any brother who is engaged in divisive behaviors counter to the principals of F, C, & L, or takes actions that are divisive and destructive to the order and function of the PA Department, will face the full weight of the consequences of their actions up to and including formal reprimand and corrective action. Should any camp publicly or formally use language insulting to the ladies orders, fellow brothers, or promoting divisive action between the orders or within the department; that camp will likewise face any such discipline as the infraction may call for.

I am not happy with being drawn step by step toward this position. Every one of us is a volunteer who is here because we want to be here. Each of us pays our dues not because we must, but because we desire to be members. That fact has been at the forefront of my actions thus far. Commanding a group of volunteers is not unlike herding cats past an open air fish market. That being said, it is also true that when we do pay those dues, we are agreeing to abide by the rules and regulations of the organization we are joining.

It is never a pleasant thing to be forced to punish another person. It is particularly unpleasant if that person has been a loyal and valued member in the past. They may be someone that you personally respect and like. At the same time, I am in the position of Department Commander, charged with upholding our rules and regulations and overseeing the discipline of those who might try and work to damage the Order. If requesting peace and unity fails to reach the ears of those over whom I have been placed in command should fail to gain their agreement, I am bound by the position I am in to take what actions may be required by the Constitutions and Regulations of our Order.

Therefore brothers, I am asking this one more time. Please, in the interest of putting the past several years of bitterness and division behind us. Place your grievances under the mantle of charity. If you have just cause to be upset, then by all means follow the proper chain of command and bring those grievances to the proper authorities. You may find that your ideas are correct, or you may find you are not, but only by following the correct course of action can any of us preserve our organization. Only through working together can we actually get done the work we joined to do. I do not know about the rest of you, but I am willing to bet most of us do not pay our dues for the right to get into petty arguments and infighting with people that would otherwise be our friends.

Yours in Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

Douglas P. McMillin

Commander, Pennsylvania Department

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