

HUMAN RELATIONS IN TIME OF GLOBAL CRISIS

Ideas for a round table, Lions Mediterranean Convention, Tunis, March 27th 2009

Ladies and gentlemen, dear Lions,

My discourse unfortunately probes the darker side of the human relations in our region. We are all aware of historical burdens which abound in it, erupting from time to time in destructive manner. Living in Croatia during war years in nineties was quite right example.

However, very soon after the war, we as Lions started the campaign against hatred, as the most destructive factor burdening both local and international human and social relations, and leading to its worst manifestation – that of violence.

Strategically, we focused on the young population, which could be the most easily educated against hatred and its consequences. This education is an ongoing project that we have already presented on international Lions forums (Taormina, Algiers, Lecce, Aix-en-Provence) and I am not going to speak about its past achievements here.

What I must say is that our project today faces completely new challenges. When we were doing it in the first place, we were a motivated nation in renaissance, with regained independence and perspective economic outlook. Now, when the gale of financial crisis swept both financial and real sectors all over the world, we are forced to stop and ponder over the future of our activities. We came into the new environment in which we must act in proper way. Like before, we recognized the power of young people as decisive factor to overcome the crisis. But they cannot do it without our help, being mature generation that has already met even rougher times and should have some accumulated wisdom to deal with it.

Let's consider the situation with the young people today. The main problem is that the majority of them are disorientated. What is our society offering to them today? The questionable value system that does not distinctly tells right from wrong, ruined economies and job losses caused by insatiable greed of neoliberal globalization and financial villains, irreparably damaged environment that goes hand in hand with it. We are not offering them too much. We are actually depriving them of hope to live and prosper in better world.

We are also neglecting them and letting them to their own devices, which generate drug addiction, alcoholism, criminal activity or alienation that produces such tragic incidents as mass murders in schools, as you have witnessed in USA, Finland and Germany.

We are of course aware that parents and families bear the primary role in the orientation of young people. In the second row comes the educational system, followed by other social and religious institutions. We as Lions are also active, founding and nurturing Leo clubs, organizing youth exchange programs and youth camps and dedicating some of our actions to young people in need.

However, is it sufficient for the coming economic turmoil we are heading at? We can already witness more euro skepticism, awakening of nationalism, economic protectionism and congruent trends that tend for closing in national shells, which is contradictory to international openness that could only boost economy and welfare on both national and global level.

What good can result from closed systems? Young people are more easily indoctrinated and become not only disorientated, but also disillusioned and unfit for necessary changes. Closed systems are perfect place for development of hatred we are so bitterly fighting against. Thus, we should focus our activities in direction of helping our young people not to close within, but to open to other systems and cultures, widening horizons and gaining the knowledge and opportunities to end this crisis.

So, let's speak about it here. What can we do to improve human and social relations in our region during this turmoil period? And please, let's focus to younger population because they are the ones who will inherit consequences of our ill doings.

Examples could easily be defined for Croatia. As you may know, we have a new political issue with another Mediterranean country – Slovenia (since we are not a political organization, I will not give here any details or take sides). This is the neighbor with whom we have lived in harmony for thousand years. Now you can hear politicians or read press from both sides that is throwing oil on fire and creating a new irrational hatred that have never existed. This could be the opportunity for Lions from both sides to act jointly against it. I can say here that our district will act to that end and try to intensify relations with Slovenian Lions in order to see what we can do in order to diminish further deterioration of the situation. It would also be beneficial if this Convention could send the message to both districts advising them to work in that direction.

This is not politics. This is just a reminder of our social duty already written in our governing documents.

We also tried to establish anti-violence forum on web, intended for exchange of opinions how Croatian Lions could help fighting the rising violence in their society (violence in schools, on sport events, in families, on streets, etc.). Maybe we could extend this idea on the level of the Mediterranean Lions Anti-Violence forum and use it as a vehicle for future exchange of ideas and more constructive work of this useful body. In that case we should speak about the technical realization of such a project. The mere nature of this medium is inclined to younger population, and is definitely creating an open international attitude, necessary for these hard times.

My dear fellow Lions, please consider just these two ideas as my contribution to this round table. There are of course more of them, but our time is limited.

At the end, I would like to suggest that this theme of fighting the hatred and violence and fostering the betterment of human relations between the people of Mediterranean basin should be the permanent theme of Mediterranean Conventions.

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