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## AMERICANISM REPORT

IN THE MARCH ISSUE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE THERE WAS A SMALL ARTICLE ENTITLED "WHAT'S THE PROBLEM" THE ARTICLE GOES ON TO SAY "WE'D LIKE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE BIGGEST MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE FACING THE AMERICAN LEGION AND, LET US IN ON YOUR BEST IDEAS ABOUT A SOLUTION." THEY WILL PAY \$50.00 FOR THE MOST INTRIGUING ANSWERS AND WILL PUBLISH THEM.

THIS DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A BIG PROBLEM TO ME, ALTHOUGH AS A COUNTY COMMANDER I CAN SEE IT IS TO SOME POSTS. I HAVE AN ANSWER TO THE BIG PROBLEM OR AT LEAST A REASON, ITS CALLED APATHY PURE AND SIMPLE.

FIRST OF ALL, WE GET SICK OF HEARING ABOUT MEMBERSHIP FROM THE POST, COUNTY, DISTRICT AND STATE ALL YEAR LONG. WE ALL REALIZE THAT MEMBERSHIP IS VERY IMPORTANT AND IF EVERYONE WOULD PAY THEIR DUES IN JULY OR AUGUST WHEN THEY ARE DUE, JUST THINK OF ALL THE TIME WE WOULD HAVE TO SPEND ON ALL THE FINE PROGRAMS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION.

BUT NO, WE SPEND 8-10 MONTHS TRYING TO GET SOME OF OUR MEMBERS TO PAY THEIR DUES. GRANTED THIS DOESN'T TAKE EVERYONE IN THE POST BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT, IT USUALLY TAKES A FEW OF THE MOST ACTIVE MEMBERS TO GET THE MEMBERSHIP JOB DONE. AGAIN, I COME BACK TO THE WORD APATHY, WHICH MR. WEBSTER SAYS IS "WANT OF FEELING, LACK OF PASSION, EMOTION OR EXCITEMENT, INSENSIBILITY, UNCONCERN"

I DON'T PRETEND TO HAVE THE ANSWER AS TO WHY OUR MEMBERS CAN PAY THEIR MONTHLY BILLS, BUT WHEN THEIR RENEWAL NOTICE COMES THEY TOSSE IT ASIDE, INSTEAD OF PAYING IT RIGHT AWAY AND SAVING THEIR POSTS MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE ALOT OF CHASING. OF COURSE THIS ISN'T ALL MEMBERS, AT MY POST ABOUT ONE THIRD PAY THEIR DUES WITH THE FIRST RENEWAL NOTICE.

I WISH I COULD THINK OF A WAY TO EXPLAIN TO ALL LEGION MEMBERS HOW MUCH BETTER AND SIMPLER ALL OUR LIVES WOULD BE IF ONLY THEY WOULD PAY UP IN JULY OR AUGUST OR SEPT. SOME TELL ME ITS NOT DEC. YET, AND I TRY TO EXPLAIN THAT THEY SHOULD THINK OF THE LEGION YEAR AS BEING FROM JULY THROUGH JUNE, NOT JAN THROUGH DEC. I HAVE ALSO BEEN TOLD THAT BY PAYING IN AUG OR SEPT, THAT THE LEGION IS MAKING ALL THE INTEREST OFF THEIR MONEY INSTEAD OF THEM. I TOLD ONE MEMBER IF HE REALLY NEEDED THE INTEREST OFF THAT \$20.00, THAT MAYBE HE WAS ELIGIBLE FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE COUNTY.

AGAIN I COME BACK TO APATHY SOME OF OUR MEMBERS ONLY BELONG BECAUSE SOMEONE TALKS THEM OR SHAMES THEM INTO IT, NOT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO. I HAVE BEEN TOLD BY MEMBERS THAT THEY "DON'T DO MEETINGS" AND BY ANOTHER THAT HE WAS ONLY A FORK AND PLATE MEMBER, MEANING HE WOULD COME FOR FREE MEALS.



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MY POST JUST HAD A 50 YEAR MEMBER WHO USED TO BRAG THAT HE HAD NEVER BEEN TO A MEETING IN ALL THOSE YEARS. IN FACT WHEN WE HONORED OUR FIFTY YEAR MEMBERS THIS YEAR HE DID'NT EVEN COME TO THAT, TO RECEIVE HIS CERTIFICATE.

IT'S PRETTY HARD TO ARGUE WITH THAT KIND OF APATHY. I DEBATED ABOUT GIVING THIS REPORT TODAY BECAUSE I KNOW THAT THE MEN HERE TODAY AREN'T THE PROBLEM, ITS THE ONES NOT HERE TODAY BECAUSE THEY KNOW THOSE OF US HERE WILL KEEP THINGS GOING, WE WILL DO ALL THE WORK FOR NO THANKS, WE WILL FIGHT TO PROTECT THEIR BENEFITS AND IF WE DON'T THEY WILL CERTAINLY BE THE LOUDEST TO YELL.

PATRIOTISM, I FEEL IS AT A LOW EBB IN THIS COUNTRY, AND I DON'T PRETEND TO HAVE THE ANSWERS. SOME OF OUR MEMBERS JUST DON'T THINK ABOUT ALL THE GOOD THINGS THAT THE AMERICAN LEGION HAS TO OFFER, OR THEY DON'T CARE. APATHY

WHEN NATIONAL ASKS WHAT CAN BE DONE, AND WHEN ONLY 50% OF ALL ELIGIBLE VETERANS BELONG TO THE AMERICAN LEGION I THINK WE HAVE THE ANSWER. GET OUT THERE AND RECRUIT. WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE PERSONNAL CONTACT, GO DOOR TO DOOR WITH A MEMBERSHIP DRIVE. THE ONLY RESON THAT MEMBERSHIP IS GOING DOWN IS BECAUSE NOBODY IS OUT THERE TRYING TO SELL THE AMERICAN LEGION. APATHY

THATS MY REPORT AND I MOVE FOR ITS ADOPTION.

*Dave Dough*