

## **PROTOCOL**

### **Be A Pro With Protocol**

There really should be a better word than protocol. The dictionary definition is couched in terms pertaining to military, international agreements, diplomatic arrangements and dealings between countries and heads of state.

Not many of our members are involved with this kind of planning. Very few Lions will attend functions with ambassadors and kings. Even fewer will be involved with making diplomatic arrangements at those kinds of functions. However, every club president, district officer, many chairmen and Lions members will, at some time or other, be involved with protocol as it applies to Lions Clubs International.

Perhaps the meaning of protocol for Lions should simply translate to words like 'courtesy' or 'consideration'. As most Lions are polite and knowledgeable about etiquette, why is it that frequent examples of poor taste and lack of protocol occur at many Lions functions?

There is no specific answer to this, but often there may be a lack of communication, a lack of planning, or a lack of understanding about the customs, habits, likes and dislikes of our fellow Lions and guests.

There are certain basic considerations, which underlie the effective exercise of protocol. Let's discuss some of them.

### **Communications**

After the initial arrangements have been made to obtain your special guests for a Lions function, the chairman should write and give all the details. Spell it out. Don't use vague terms. No such word as informal should ever be used. Use definite descriptions -- business suit, sport coat and slacks, long dress, short evening dress, black tie and jacket, white formal dinner jacket. Give as much detail about your function as possible and let the guests know exactly what is expected of them.

### **Greeting Your Guests**

The Immediate Past President, or another Past President should greet the guests as soon as they walk in the door and they should be escorted and introduced to others gathered in the room. Guests should at no time be left alone. If other guests are seated and the guest of honour arrives before the start of proceedings, he/she should be escorted to their seat at the head table.

## **The Head Table**

Seating arrangements at the head table often appear to be a challenge. The guest of honour always is seated to the right of the President. The remaining seats are designated according to the importance or position in the chain of authority. Always use place cards to avoid confusion as to who sits where.

## **The Flag, Anthem and Prayer**

Protocol requires the proper positioning of our National Flag when it is flown with flags of other countries, provinces or organizations. It should be noted that our National Flag should be given the place of honor at all times. That place is always on the left as you are facing it with the exception of being placed in the middle when three flags are being flown. Should you be hosting an International guest it is always in order to display the flag of their country as long as ours is given the place of honour. It is also in good taste to play the guests National Anthem if available.

It is suggested that the Lions Invocation or the Grace be utilized by all Clubs to ensure that no guest is made to feel uneasy about the use of a prayer which is from a different religious persuasion. The Lions Invocation and Lions Grace are non-denominational.

## **The Meal**

Lions Clubs are finding it increasingly difficult to offer deluxe food at functions due to prohibitive costs. Consequently, many functions are held in church halls, community centres, etc. Occasionally, paper or plastic ware is used. Whatever the menu, your guests should be served the same food in the same manner as everyone else. However, if your guests have dietary restrictions, religious or otherwise, it is essential that the committee provide for that situation.

These are the basic facts concerning dietary restrictions about which all Lions should be familiar. Guests also have a responsibility to make their restrictions known. Once the restrictions have been communicated, It is the club's responsibility to arrange for the fruit plate, the fish or vegetarian dinner, ahead of time. Never wait until the function begins to make these arrangements.

## **Introduction**

The honour of introducing your guest speaker is usually given to the highest, ranking member in attendance, not necessarily the Chairman or Master of Ceremonies. There are reasons for this. Involving the highest, ranking member is a way of providing a reason for the visit. The introducer may have a personal relationship with the guest. He may have served with him or traveled with him. His knowledge may lend some colour and human interest to what otherwise might be a dull or canned type of introduction.

## **Solicitations and Fines**

The head table may be considered fair game, but don't approach your guests directly. If they want to participate, they will make their intentions known.

## **Appreciation**

There are many ways to show appreciation to your special guest. The best way is to thank them. Every speaker is a performer of sorts and the attention given them after their presentation is their reward. It isn't necessary for the entire gathering to overwhelm them at the head table, but those who particularly enjoyed the presentation, as well as the committee and key members, should take the time to make a few comments and say thanks.

## **WHERE DO THE FLAGS GO?**

The way it usually happens is that 15 minutes before the big event is due to start, someone, in a big panic, will rush up and say, "Which flag goes where?"

You really ought to know the answer, because there is International Protocol involved and you would not want, for instance, to have placed the flags in the wrong position.

So, hereunder are some rules you can follow for displaying the flags of Canada, and **remember that any reference to left and right are taken from the spectators' point of view, facing the Head Table:**

### **PLACE OF HONOUR:**

In an array of flags, the Place of Honour is

**ALWAYS**

In the centre if there are three flags displayed

**and**

On the left if there are any number of flags, other than three.

### **THE FIRST RULE IS:**

The Canadian Flag always goes in the Place of Honour. This is invariable and this position is not yielded for so-called courtesy or any other reason.

### **GENERAL ORDER OF DISPLAY:**

Having placed the Canadian flag in the place of honour, the other flags should be displayed in the following sequence:

National flags  
Provincial flags  
Organizational (i.e. Lions) flags