

Concerning the 33rd Degree

The 33° is not a prize to be awarded based on favoritism. No more is it to be won as a result of successful lobbying or political scheming. It is an honor conferred in recognition of Masonic distinction and service. The recipient should be a Mason of outstanding capabilities and intelligence. He should be a representative man in his community. The Supreme Council must necessarily depend on the local Councils of Deliberation to pick out men of the right sort and caliber, and if the local bodies fail in this regard, we are bound to have men who will wear the honor of the 33° with neither distinction to themselves nor honor to the fraternity. Just as in every state there are many faithful and worthy members of the craft whom no one would ever think to make Grand Master of the symbolic degrees, so also are there such members of the Scottish Rite who in spite of many commendable virtues are, nevertheless, short of the essential qualifications to become a Sovereign Grand Inspector General. On the other hand, it often happens that there are brilliant Masons of recognized standing in their communities who do not in other respects measure up to the standard. A brilliant rascal is no more worthy to be a chief of masonry than a virtuous ignoramus. Remember, too, that the influence of your state in the Supreme Council does not so much depend on the number of members it may have as upon us the quality of the men who represent it. The Councils of Deliberation who make it a habit to recommend candidates because they are good fellows or good politicians will find their states lacking in influence in the jurisdiction in spite of the number of 33° Masons it may chance to have.

Excerpted, verbatim, from the May 1924 allocution of Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander Sumner A. Furniss 33° delivered during the 43rd Annual Session