



THE MAGIC OF ROTARY

AT THIRD PLENARY SESSION

Bhichai Rattakul

Past RI President

The Auditorium (10th Floor)
1445-1500, Saturday, Oct. 18, 2008

Director Jackson Hsieh, President D.K. Lee, The Rotary Foundation Chairman, Jonathan Majiyagbe, ladies and gentlemen and my fellow Rotarians,

Although this is not my first visit to Taipei, but since the last time I was here the path to Taipei has been a long and slow one.

And now being in your midst once again I feel very grateful for the invitation that Director Jackson Hsieh has extended to me to speak at this prestigious gathering of Rotary leaders, and to have the opportunity to listen to the wise words of our President D.K. Lee, and our Rotary Foundation Chairman, Jonathan Majiyagbe.

I am indeed very conscious of this privilege and honour!

It is also very heartening to meet many old friends and make many new ones, among whom is of course Past Vice President Gary Huang whose leadership we in Asia are proud of.

This Institute is very fortunate to have so many current and in-coming General Officers of RI in attendance. We must congratulate our Convener Jackson for this. These General Officers are truly living symbols of unselfish service; but above all as long as we have in Rotary leaders like **you**...yes, **you** the past, current and in-coming district governors coming from the whole continent of Asia, we have no fear that Rotary will fail to retain and maintain its high quality as an organization that is really making a very significant contribution towards mankind

As a choice of subject for such an occasion, it is

difficult to believe that there is anything new to say about Rotary.

But, after that beginning more than 103 years ago, I am sure all the Rotary points have been made over and over again, and perhaps you would feel that it is an occupational hazard of being a Rotarian to listen to talks about Rotary.

Still, you and I have to admit that we are Rotarians participating in a Rotary International Zone Institute, and what else we should talk and discuss if it is not Rotary!

And above all, why are we here?



No doubt, it is the **magic** of Rotary that has brought us all to Teipei!

I am quite sure that during your long years of Rotary membership you have been asked by Rotarians and non-Rotarians, and often even within our rank, why does Rotary appeal to such a variety of men and women and nations? Why has it appealed for over a century and grown in size so dramatically with so much

influence over the societies where we live and the lives of the millions whom we serve?

The answer to that is because I am convinced that the **principles** and **ideal** on which Rotary is founded are **indestructible**. I think, after much consideration, is that Rotary combines **fellowship** with **service**.

This may seem a trivial explanation and unworthy of our great Movement, but allow me to show you how important the combination of **fellowship** and **service** in Rotary is.

There are many organizations which stand for either fellowship or service, but I think...like the horse and carriage or love and marriage, in Rotary you cannot have one without the other.

Think of service alone, many organizations do excellent work of service. In both the developed and developing countries we have a fine record of these charitable pursuits. But, it is fair to say that all these organizations stand for service only, and not for fellowship, and they rarely influence the personality of those taking part in the service which is provided.

Now, on the other hand you can have fellowship in a number of societies, without service. Anybody's golf club or ma-jeoung club, or music club is one that exists for fellowship alone.

Thus, it is fair to say that in these societies of men and women you never get a **depth** of **feeling** such as you do in Rotary. And I dare say that that type of organization never influences the **personality** of its members!

I wonder if it has ever occurred to you, therefore, that this is the **magic** of Rotary and the secret of its success!

But, a proof of this is surely in the attitude of the general public towards Rotarians. They do not just think of us for what we are doing for the communities in which we live and the contribution which we make.

If you asked a representative group of people what they knew about Rotarians, they would not just tell you of the work that Rotarians do, they would **remember** you as a **personality**, a special sort of person.

I think a Rotarian is more often known for what he or

she **is** than what he or she **does**. I do not think this happens by accident.

So, this is the **magic** of Rotary...selective but not exclusive; united in responsibility but not in self-interest; idealistic without intolerance; philanthropic without sectarian prejudices...a group of men and women who seek from Rotary neither prestige nor influence nor power, but only for **fellowship** and **service**.

It is for this reason that I say to you...be proud of what you are. Be proud of the tasks ahead.

My fellow Rotarians, the Object of Rotary itself teaches us to develop acquaintance, to practice high ethical standards, to learn international understanding, to apply the ideal of service to business and community life.

I ask you to think what that Object means and to reflect on how it influences you as an individual.

I refer particularly to **Vocational Service**.

Although, it probably arose by accident from the single classification, yet it **is** the finest concept in Rotary.

It tells a person to be proud of his or her job because the person represents it. It encourages a person to talk about it. It makes a person aware of the different responsibilities of others, and it gives a person an opportunity to share problems of his or her vocation with other people.

Yes, Rotary can pride itself on how it has weathered the storms with distinction in the many humanitarian



and educational programmes. And yet, it is important to recognize that although we have made significant

progress in the many areas of human activity, our business and professional lives continue to be plagued with scandals and corrupt practices.

That shift in ethical standards is clearly observable in many quarters, both in the business and political arenas, and it is spreading rapidly across society.

These people never give a second thought to whether this despicable display of greed for power could stoke the fire of civil unrest.

This is very worrisome!

How can we divert this trend or at least do something to prevent it from spreading out further in society and even in Rotary?

My fellow Rotarians, we all know what sets Rotary apart, what makes it so unique.

It is its **classifications** principle!

To me, this is really Rotary's "trademark". It is Rotary's fundamental characteristic, the manner in which it gives each Rotarian the privilege of expressing one's commitment to ethical principles of which life in society is always in need.

It is for this reason that I sincerely believe that Vocational Service is essential to the lives of the individuals and is perhaps the best area through which each Rotarian can express his or her idealism.

Yes, Vocational Service is **integrity** and **trust**.

Yes, Vocational Service seeks to improve the standard of business and profession...not only among the public, but more importantly, amongst the Rotarians themselves.

Yes, Vocational Service is the **magic** of Rotary!

Another **magic** of Rotary is our **Peace Programme**.

We must accept the fact that peace building process is not something that can be achieved in a year or two. It is a long time process and has to be the initiative of the people.

But, in a small way, what we in Rotary can do is to focus our efforts on the **tools** we already have in our possession.

As Rotarians, we must not be classified under the category of...watching things happen, or have no idea what happens.

We must make things happen! We must make things happen for a better tomorrow!

And if the kind of tomorrow and the kind of peace is to be a lasting one, it must be one not merely for us or our neighbours, but for all mankind. Not merely peace in our life time, but peace for all time.

I realize that even with the combined efforts of many nations and the "tools" we have in Rotary, the pursuit of peace and the search for harmony is not as easy as the desire for it.

Lao-Tse, the great Chinese philosopher once said.... "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step"

Let us in Rotary begin that one step now!

May I suggest that instilling peace as a basic instinct in younger people as the **first** step is crucial in stopping violence every where.

We can plant peace instincts through Rotary's Youth Exchange programme, Interact and Rotaract, RYLA, Group Study Exchange, and the Ambassadorial Scholarship, etc.

But two of our most significant efforts, Rotary Centres for International Studies programme...a two-year course leading to Masters Degree in the field of peace and conflict resolution at six Universities around the world.

Tomorrow, we will have the opportunity to hear, first hand, from one of our outstanding World Peace Fellows of her experience, and the role of Rotary in promoting world understanding and providing solutions to international conflicts.

And the more recent one, actually in its third year, a three-month intensive course for mid-career



professionals in field related to conflict resolutions and peace building at the prestigious Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

Led by experts in the field, this shorter programme balances *theoretical* and *practical* learning while capitalizing on the diverse experiences of both lecturers and participants.

This programme which has been recently approved by the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation as a *permanent* one with full scholarship provided, is ideal for busy professionals. Its customized curriculum helps promising leaders expand their global outlook, strengthen their negotiations skill, and ultimately make a positive impact on future peace and conflict resolution efforts worldwide.

These two programmes are actually the realization of a *dream* held by Rotarians for many decades. It is a *dream* that peaceful dialogues can replace the use of force and arms threat.

The creation of these two programmes is aimed to *Make Dreams Real* by ensuring that for generations to come we will give the world practical and effective instruments of peace...people educated in the ideals of

Rotary and in the study of peace.

But, after all that has been said, I think we have to be realistic in our approach.

We have to admit that the final destination toward which we are bound lies yet ahead at the end of the road that may be long and rough.

Yes, together, we are confronting the threat of ignorance, threat to peace, threat to a better health and better life.

Yes, together we have to work hard, very hard, towards the global eradication of that dreadful disease, Polio...a promise we made more than 20 years ago and a cause that we must continue to pursue until the work is done.

Together, therefore, we must come to respond to all the challenges that come before us.

Together, we must *Make Dreams Real* and make sure that our dreams will never die.

Together, my fellow Rotarians, the work must begin anew! The hope must rise again!

And, together we must make the *Magic* of Rotary lives on!

