

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
(818) 780-3951

To: The World Service Conference 1988

From: The WSC Select Committee on Service Structure

During this past year the following members served on the committee: Leah Goodrich, Chuck Lehman, Jack Bernstein, Greg Pierce, Ed Duquette, Dave Tynes, Mary Van Every, Mark Daley, Jim Wymore, Terry Boring, Beth Kuecher, and Leo Smothers. Of the twelve members only two had not previously served on the committee. Continuity of service is important to our committee and will be especially so during this next year.

The committee held two open input sessions at the WSC Workshops in Newark and Denver, and three working meetings in June, November, and March. We also received written input from individuals and service committees throughout the year. Our open input sessions did not produce the kind of participation and discussion that they were intended to. However, the committee felt that the effort to bring greater visibility to their work will engender a better understanding towards the project. The written input we received was sometimes very difficult to understand and combine with the draft. Most of our input seemed to concentrate the majority of its comments to language usage and not to conceptual expressions and ideas. Most Select Committee members felt that this type of effort was more important at a latter stage of development and resulted in some rather inconclusive evidence, as far as judging the support of the Fellowship was concerned. We would like to go on record though that several service committees submitted very useful material in a simple, practical form. It is very obvious from this experience that more time and effort must be put into assisting the Fellowship with the preparation of input material.

At both our June and March meetings the committee reviewed and discussed all the motions that were committed to us by WSC'87. These motions concerned the terms, rotation, and number of WSO Board of Directors, the function of the WSO staff, and the term for Board of Trustees. In our deliberations we felt that any recommendation from us on these issues would be premature, since we were not developing those sections of the Guide to Service at this time. We have notified the appropriate RSC's regarding our deliberations and our intention to give full review to these items during the next Conference year.

Our working meeting were very productive, we just weren't able to have enough of them. Our June meeting brought forth the draft proposal on an evolving International structure. This proposal provided information about the direction our committee believed would be most supportive to the

growing needs of our worldwide Fellowship. There were two ideas presented in that draft that are very important. The first was the recognition of the need for more autonomous flexibility in the development of services within the many cultures and countries existing around the world. The second important concept we wished to express in the proposal was that the responsibility for the integrity of the Narcotics Anonymous program belonged in the hands of the worldwide membership and would no longer be perceived as the property of the American Fellowship. As of this report we have not gone any further with the details of this proposal which we will have to complete during the next year. The actual implementation of this plan would not be taking place until sometime in the early 1990's.

The WSC Literature Committee unanimously recommended that the work in progress, "In Loving Service", be turned over to our committee as input to our work. Each committee member was given a copy to study the possible utilization of this material in whole or partial form. We have discussed this thoroughly and at this point, do not believe it is useable for our purposes. However, we are not recommending any action concerning this material until we move closer to a decision regarding the actual format and the possibility of any additional components of the Guide to Service.

Our November and March meetings concentrated on generating discussion about service concepts designed to provide general guidance to our whole system of services. This came about as the result of our continuous discussions about many of the recurring issues most commonly debated in previous years or those that have gone unresolved. These discussions revealed some interesting observations and startling conclusions. Practically speaking we have actually had very little experience with our own principles in operating as a whole Fellowship. We have also never compiled what past service experience we have learned into a reference form, that clearly discussed and explained the reasons for establishing service policies and procedures. The results of our inexperience with our principles and our lack of written explanations often show up in the form of repeating mistakes. This is usually evidenced in cycles when a turnover in leadership has taken place and takes the value of the lessons learned with them. The service manuals we have produced so far have been more guideline oriented and do not necessarily satisfy the many questions that arise about our service structure and our groups.

The task of producing a comprehensive manual on service has not been an easy one to complete. Even the smallest detail often brings considerable discussion. Our individual understandings of the purpose and function of each service level or unit, has sometimes differed so widely, that it has been difficult to arrive at a consensus among us. At first we were somewhat perplexed at how this could be in a Fellowship whose first principle concerns unity and common welfare. But after much thought and deliberation it became quite evident why we have developed that way. We have not yet established a commonly understood relationship of our basic principles to our services and groups. Without access to the experience we have gained our services will always be somewhat unstable and many singular interpretations and approaches to service will continue to develop.

Our trusted servants on every level need to have a clearly defined understanding of their functional boundaries in the performance of their

duties. The relationship of the service structure to our groups often becomes a question of appropriate authority and responsibility, which has never been stated or defined and universally accepted. This brings to light the conflict we have observed at every WSC meeting regarding group conscience and trusted servants, ultimate and delegated authority, and mutual trust. The Traditions speak precisely to the groups and their purpose but have not been thoroughly developed and expressed in material to guide our services. Our service committees and boards, and especially our trusted servants need to understand what decisions they have the authority to make and which ones are the province of the groups themselves.

We considered the magnitude of the problem this type of inconsistency creates in our services, and went on to examine and explore our Traditions, to see if we could possibly support some type of common understanding in a manner we could, as a committee, be comfortable with. The following statements reflect only a summary of our thoughts and are not intended to be considered final conclusions on these issues:

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience." The first part of this Tradition recognizes that ultimately, the authority and responsibility for all services is in the hands of the group conscience as expressed in the N.A. groups. This is accomplished in several ways. The service structure is dependent upon the support of the groups, both financially (fund flow) and with the selection of trusted servants. Without that support it cannot and will not function. Secondly, ultimate authority is expressed by the acceptance or rejection of any decision made by a service board or committee. Group autonomy gives each group the right to accept or reject any decision made in its behalf, even if that decision is otherwise supported or rejected by the vast majority of other N.A. groups.

(Having said this, we recognized existing policies in our structure that are contrary to these thoughts such as the N.A. fund flow system which actually places the authority in the RSC's to make most financial support decisions about world services.)

Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern." A good servant is one who is able to anticipate the needs of those they serve. They are chosen for their experience, their knowledge of principles, and their ability to reflect those principles in their actions. They are not governors or enforcers of rules and regulations. They act for us, and are subject to the same disciplines found in our principles that our groups and members are. It is the principles that we rely upon (mutual respect) and not the personalities. Trusted servants are endowed with the ability to fully participate in their defined service responsibilities, and to make decisions on how best to serve and when they should consult further on important matters with those they serve (mutual trust). A practical balance between the group conscience and trusted servants does exist. (At this point we discussed those things that absolutely need to be brought back for group conscience: any change in the Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions or the nature of N.A. and the approval of recovery literature. Other things were discussed also but not decided upon.) Even though we understand and accept these as a basis for how our trusted servants function in their defined service responsibilities, the groups retain the right to instruct their representatives implicitly.

(With these thoughts in mind another question about our current structure became evident: Why in the direct line of transference (GSR to ASR to RSR) of delegated authority, does it all of a sudden stop at the RSR and not continue?)

We discussed other basic questions also and developed responses similarly or have simply posed the question.

1. What is the purpose and nature of our service structure?

The purpose of our service structure is to make the N.A. message of recovery available on a broad scale to the addict who still suffers. (Our groups and members are how we actually carry the message.) It is the natural evolution of our principle of service as stated in our Steps and Traditions. It provides unity and enables our Fellowship to act as a whole upon important matters. It maintains the integrity of the group and its purpose, by doing those things for the group that it cannot or should not do for itself.

2. What is the relationship of the Twelve Traditions to our service structure?

The traditions protect the groups from distracting or disruptive influences. They also create the service structure and provide the basic spiritual guidance for all N.A. services.

3. How do we define professionalism in N.A.?

4. Are special workers trusted servants?

5. What is group conscience?

The collective utilization of spiritual principles by members of a group to preserve the common welfare and fulfill the primary purpose of the group.

6. What is meant by the term "direct responsibility"?

7. How do we define self-supporting in relationship to our service structure?

8. What is our responsibility as a Fellowship?

These are only examples of the many basic questions that we have come upon, and there are certainly many more that need to be raised before we are completed with our work. We have included them in this report so you can see for yourself the in-depth nature of our work. Your understanding and participation will assist us in completing our task.

The focus of our deliberations shifted to include the general perception of the WSC, its role, purpose and function. The results of our in-depth discussions of the WSC, pointed out a variety of additional, related items of concern about the operation of the Conference. The WSC guidelines as they

appear in the TWGSS, were meant to describe the annual meeting itself and not the continual year around operation of the Conference and its committees. Consequently, we have spent the last seven years amending this section which was never suppose to fulfill the full responsibilities it has since been required to. This confusion has further been complicated by other misconceptions. Leading the way is the general perception that the decisions made by the WSC are the expression of a collective ultimate authority. Through our investigation of our Traditions we believe that this is fundamentally incorrect. "The WSC is instead the place where the effective voice of our groups from around our Fellowship, through their chosen representatives, come together with those responsible for our world service operations to establish direction and guidance for our worldwide service efforts." This statement more correctly acknowledges the functional reality of the WSC and does not imply any authority with is out of balance with our principles. If we take a step back and look closely we may conclude that the WSC (nor any service body) cannot speak as an ultimate authority. It is only meant to be the collective voice of our Fellowship, determining the mainstream of N.A. experience, which it has properly been delegated to do. The groups, utilizing their group conscience as an ultimate authority, in reality decide the force of any of our service decisions, not the participants of the WSC.

These discussions illuminate the critical importance of our work during this next year. As a Fellowship and as a committee, we have had to overcome many obstacles in the past four years. Our tremendous growth has magnified many problems that resulted in a crisis management approach (concentrating our efforts on immediate situations), rather than having the luxury of an extended evaluation process. Although this has been the case, our committee members feel confident that if the WSC participants decide to support our recommendation and our budget request, we can finish our work and produce an acceptable draft for review. However, as a Fellowship, we must commit ourselves to a wide reaching and in-depth examination of our principles and their relationship to our service structure. The draft we produce may contain many concepts generally unfamiliar to many members, but as a committee we feel it is imperative that this work consists of an exhaustive, thorough effort, to provide the Fellowship with a guide to service based on the integrity of our principles. To this end we have fully committed ourselves. Thank you for allowing us to be of service.