

# WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



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## *SPECIAL REPORT*

March, 1988

To the Fellowship,

The World Service Board of Trustees, during its regular meeting in February, had the opportunity to discuss at length all the issues contained in the 1988 Conference Agenda Report. This was the first time the Trustees as a whole had the chance to review the material as it was presented. While discussing these issues as a Board we became particularly concerned, as we're sure many of our members did, with motion #11 in the WSC Policy Committee's report. This concern placed us in a dilemma; the motion concerns the elimination of votes, including our own, at the World Service Conference. Should we comment on a motion that concerns us or should we refrain from commenting on a motion we feel is not in the best interests of Narcotics Anonymous? After considerable discussion the Board felt obligated to relay their thoughts on this issue to the Fellowship in a special report from the Trustees. We felt that it would, in fact, be irresponsible to remain silent on this issue.

This is a most unfortunate circumstance as the Conference Agenda report has been published, distributed, and in many cases is already in the discussion process. Nevertheless, the Board of Trustees felt strongly that our responsibility, according to WSB guidelines, is to convey our comments directly to the Fellowship regarding this issue and its relationship to our Twelve Traditions. It is our concern that the Fellowship is now being asked to make a decision on an important issue without the benefit of adequate information or presentation, and that there are principles involved that the Fellowship should be aware of when discussing this issue.

Our primary concern is for balance as an integral part of our decisions in Narcotics Anonymous. We believe that balance is an expression of the sanity promised by our Second Step. Our Traditions also express our reliance on balance, in the form of principles, on which we conduct our efforts: Tradition One, the importance of the individual member must be balanced by what is best for the common welfare; Tradition Four, a single group has tremendous freedom to conduct its own activities, but must consider the welfare of other groups and N.A. as a whole, when its actions may affect them; Tradition Eight, N.A. Twelfth Step work should never be paid for but we may hire special workers to staff our service centers; Tradition Nine, we shouldn't organize ourselves as groups but we may create an organization (service structure) that we are responsible to support and is therefore directly responsible to us.

Our Second Tradition is a balance itself. In its first statement, ("For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.") it gives us all an authority to be responsible to, and it clarifies how that authority may be expressed and what purpose it serves. It then provides another tool to utilize, trusted servants, when our groups cannot or should not involve themselves. They

act for us and do not govern us. Trusted servants must then balance the concerns voiced by interested members and at the same time represent all those members who cannot or choose not to participate in the decision-making process of our Fellowship. After all, our decisions may have far reaching impact in years to come and we certainly cannot afford to dismiss the concerns of the majority of members in our Fellowship or the interests of our future members. The issue of full participation involves much more than the individuals' voting privileges; it is the principle that provides our common welfare with the best possible cross-section of N.A. experience. We should therefore be secure in the knowledge that our trusted servants are responsible to the same ultimate authority which guides our groups and members, a loving God, in which we place our implicit trust. That is the implication of Tradition Two, a practical balance, that frees our groups to do what they do best.

Anonymity suggests several other points of consideration. Each member of a group, service board, or committee is equal as far as their participation is concerned, within that particular gathering. Our principles do not deny, discriminate, or separate us. Whether we're a new member, old-timer, GSR, committee chairperson, ASC secretary, RSR, or Trustee, we are equal. When our trusted servants have been endowed with the responsibility to serve, it does not make sense then to impose limits on their function. As addicts we all share a deep desire to belong, to be a part of, not to feel that we somehow are unworthy of contributing. Our spiritual foundation pervades everything we do, both as members and as trusted servants. Although each has its specific purpose and function the principle of anonymity is applicable to both: no second class members and no second class trusted servants.

Since 1976, RSR's and trusted servants of the WSC, the WSB, and the WSO have shared the responsibility for our world services. During the late 1970's this policy was reinforced by the WSC participants who added, as additional voting members, WSC Committee Chairpersons. Beginning in 1982, however, there have been challenges made to change this policy. These challenges have taken many forms but have consistently been defeated or removed from consideration, every year the issue has been presented. At WSC '88, the number of RSR's voting will be approximately fifty-seven (57) compared to the number of other voting participants which will be at twenty (20). A clear two-thirds majority of RSR's. This is as it was originally intended to be with the representatives from regions having the greater influence. Our history reflects that this shared responsibility has insured that the best interests of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole have been served and represented in good faith. Participation by all those responsible for the continuation and growth of Narcotics Anonymous has been a key element in the development of our worldwide service efforts. By removing or diluting the spiritual value of experience and stability from our decisions we become substantially more vulnerable to the influence of personalities, wrong information, inexperience, and hastily derived decisions, opening us up to manipulation. This does not mean to say that this won't or hasn't happened with the present policy, but it is certainly less likely to take place when members experienced with our principles are able to participate fully in Fellowship decisions.

Full participation by all those who are entrusted with the responsibility for our services should be a basic premise inherent throughout our service structure. The Narcotics Anonymous service structure is not a direct representative democracy or governmental body, although it uses basic democratic principles as its foundation. The WSC is not the Congress of N.A. establishing laws and regulations; neither is it our ultimate authority. Instead our World Service Conference is the place where

representatives from around the Fellowship come together with those responsible for our world services to establish direction and guidance for our worldwide service efforts. Regional representatives and other world service trusted servants have always been equal participants in our WSC. One group is not better prepared, more spiritual, or more purely representative than the other. A regional conscience is not superior to the collective conscience of N.A. as a whole. The WSC is not the accumulation of all the regions' concerns but is responsible for furthering the common welfare and unity of the whole Fellowship's interests. That is what must be present in our decisions at the WSC, not just the sum of the parts.

It is the combination of new and fresh ideas with experience that protects us from impulsiveness, repeating our mistakes, or becoming "too old in service." Too much of one or the other will disturb the balance and affect our ability to provide our Fellowship with effective leadership in service. These are some wide reaching consequences that must be considered by our members in their discussions of this issue. The rapid turn over rate of our trusted servants throughout the Fellowship has created instability in our service structure. ASC's, RSC's and all our boards and committees are prone to repeating the same mistakes made by previous committees and boards. Our experience must stay with us or we will find ourselves no longer useful. If our services can no longer function effectively and reach the addict who still suffers, we will have to re-evaluate our purpose and admit our failure as a service structure.

N.A. is a spiritual Fellowship based on a set of principles which we are to practice in all of our affairs. They have been confirmed by our experience. Our trusted servants make informed decisions on how best to serve, while remaining faithful to our common welfare, and our primary purpose. They are chosen for their experience, their knowledge of principles, and their ability to reflect our principles in their actions. We guide them by pointing them towards our principles. This is, and should be, best exemplified by our world level trusted servants; to limit their participation would significantly impinge the expression of our spiritual principles.

There are many of us who share the concern about our service structure; however, it seems misdirected. With a few exceptions, our structure is evolving fairly strongly; at times it seems it is our service that is lacking. By focusing on structural issues we may be detracting from service issues. The WSC has established a committee to review and refine our service structure. We encourage you to allow them to do this and instead direct your efforts to the fulfillment of our service responsibilities within the group, area, regional and world services.

Practically speaking, all of our decisions are subject to an ultimate authority as expressed by the conscience of the N.A. groups. Their responsibility is to determine our effectiveness, as they will either embrace our actions willingly or disregard them altogether. Our responsibility as a service structure and as trusted servants is to furnish responsive and useful leadership in all our service efforts. We should not, as a Fellowship, settle for anything less.

We remain your trusted servants,

The World Service Board of Trustees