

WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service Chairperson's Report to the 1989 World Service Conference

The WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service would like to welcome you all to the thirteenth annual meeting of the World Service Conference. Our membership this year included Chuck Lehman, chairperson, Bob Hunter, Ed Duquette, Reuben Farris, Dave Tynes, Bob Rehmar, Becky Meyer, Debbie Ott, Leo Smothers, Mark Daley, David Taylor, Charlotte MacKean, Beth Kuecher, and Mary Van Every. Unfortunately, in the course of the year we lost Mary and Beth to resignation. We wish to thank them for the sound, thoughtful contributions they made during their tenure.

The committee met four times during the past year, in July, September, December, and April. At our September 1988 meeting we invited members from a number of N.A. communities to take part in committee discussions of local N.A. services. The discussions covered a wide range of subjects, including decision-making, finances, and the service structure. We were very pleased with the results of that meeting, and feel it was one of the most productive of the year. The invited participants settled down and spoke frankly about their experiences in service, and gave new perspective to our work on *A Guide to Service* with the insights they shared. We would like to thank them again for their cooperation, patience, and tolerance. They were a tremendous help.

At our April 1989 meeting, two members from the United Kingdom were added to the ranks of the committee, David Taylor and Charlotte MacKean. They were included at that particular point because the committee was beginning to discuss specific arrangements for national and international service which would appear in the *Guide*. David and Charlotte came to share with the committee the experience of the fellowship in the U.K. with the formation and operation of the first independent national service conference, called the U.K. Assembly, created in April 1987. David and Charlotte added clarity to our discussions of a couple of years ago on international service, and opened our eyes to a number of new issues we'd not yet considered. Their participation was invaluable.

At our April meeting we also finalized our draft of the much talked about Twelve Principles of Service for Narcotics Anonymous. I spoke briefly about the Twelve Principles in my conference chairperson's report, and the committee report, which will be delivered as soon as I'm finished, will describe in some detail their evolution, so I won't go into any further detail at the moment. I will say, however, that the committee has come to this annual meeting of the conference with a great deal of excitement, confident that we're only steps away from a goal we've been seeking for five years now: the creation of not only a service *manual* but a service *system* that

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By now, you've all read *The Twelve Principles of Service for Narcotics Anonymous*--some of you with great joy, some with anxiety. The principles represent a new way of thinking about service in N.A. They are the core of *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous*, soon to be completed. I'm going to explain how our committee has come, in five years, to the understanding represented by the Twelve Principles. And in order to do that, we need to talk a little about how our service structure has developed, and we need to talk straight.

Narcotics Anonymous did not really begin to function as a whole until the late Seventies, when the World Service Conference first met. Prior to that time, our fellowship existed only as a loose association of groups, with no pressing need for a complex structure or extended organization. Our message was carried primarily by word of mouth, from one addict to another. We had five pamphlets, a little white booklet, and no basic text. Our World Service Board of Trustees was the only service body responsible for encouraging the development of the fellowship as a whole.

Our first service manual was called *The N.A. Tree*. Developed in the mid-Seventies, it was a very simple outline of how groups, areas, regions, and world services could work together. The primary service agency for N.A. as a whole would be the Board of Trustees, according to *The Tree*. They would meet throughout the year, working through their committees and the World Service Office, which they were to manage. The plan called for them to get together once a year with regional delegates at the World Service Conference. At the conference, trustee committees would meet with delegate panels to review each field of service, and the conference as a whole would give the board guidance for the coming year's work. The plan described in *The N.A. Tree* was put into limited effect when the World Service Conference first met in 1976, as a business meeting held in conjunction with N.A.'s World Convention. In 1978 the conference met for the first time as an event in its own right, and has been meeting annually ever since.

The plan described in *The Tree* was simple, except that there wasn't any money. Our young fellowship was unable to fund the trustees, the World Service Office wasn't generating a penny beyond its immediate expenses, and the trustees could not continue funding the work from their own pockets. Because of the lack of resources, the *Tree* plan, with working trustee committees supported by a trustee-administered office, could not be effectively implemented at the time. The conference altered the plan in 1979, shifting primary responsibility for development of services affecting the whole fellowship from the non-functioning *trustee*

real solutions of our own to the problem of delivering effective services to a fellowship growing by leaps and bounds.

By early 1988, the committee sensed that something vital was missing from our discussions. We began discussing in more detail the development of a set of key principles for our service structure. As our discussions progressed, we again looked to A.A.'s experience, as well as our own, to guide us. While examining A.A.'s *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, we began to identify the basic principles they espoused and to see how they could be applied to our own service activities. We also began to identify some principles of our own, drawn directly from N.A.'s service experience.

We started slow. Our discussions were often long and laborious, but the principles began to unfold in front of us. Not to say that we didn't have our disagreements--we had plenty, and would probably still argue some of the finer points among ourselves given half a chance. Several of the principles came very easily, as we had all had some personal experience with them. Others were much more difficult. The struggle was often not with the principle itself, but with its application: How would *this* principle apply in *that* situation? But as we became more familiar with them, things came into focus. And once our basic principles were clear, we were certain of a fairly straight course to the conclusion of our project, the development of *A Guide to Service in N.A.*

We're aware of the fears the Twelve Principles may raise among some of you: the fear of central control, the fear of N.A. being taken from the hands of the groups, the fear of a tyranny of trusted servants. But the fact is that, *without* them, we have a conference that's been seven years trying to put together a book on our steps and traditions, with *still* no end in sight. Without them, our world services are only barely able to focus on the immediate needs of the fellowship, and entirely unable to look down the road to our long-term objectives. Without them, our world services are actually responsive only to conference politics, and are not capable of evaluating or responding to the real needs of the N.A. groups. Without them, our trusted servants are never sure whether or not they have the authority necessary to do the jobs we've asked them to do. Without them, the three arms of world service compete with one another, none of them able to draw on the full resources available, hence, none of them able to produce the kinds of material our fellowship needs to fulfill its mission.

Our current service structure, and our current understanding of service itself, suffers from what a diagnostician might call *systemic dysfunction*. By its very design (or lack thereof), it is unable to do what must be done. The need for fundamental change, not superficial bandages, is indicated.

The time has come to face the facts. If we expect to have quality services administered effectively on behalf of our members, we need to delegate to our trusted servants sufficient authority for them to get the job done. The ad hoc committee knew that a body of such radically new principles for N.A. service would

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appropriate to their own needs, customs, and laws, so long as they remained consistent with the steps, traditions, and principles of service.

Between now and the next conference, the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service will be conducting workshops in various locations across North America, and one workshop each in Europe and the South Pacific, to present the *Guide* to the fellowship. When this conference meets next, we hope to go over the *Guide* and pin down the details of the new national/world service arrangement. And when we leave the 1990 World Service Conference, the ad hoc committee believes we will have a plan that assures the effective delivery of the services necessary to carry the N.A. message, ultimately, to any addict on the globe seeking recovery from addiction.

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raise a great many questions, even among reasonable people. Rather than backing away from such principles for fear that "the fellowship wouldn't buy them," we were determined to offer up only the best. If the principles are correct--and we're convinced they are--they'll stand up to whatever questions may be put to them.

A Guide to Service will be released to you in early July. It describes in detail an N.A. service structure reorganized in light of the Twelve Principles. The most significant changes would occur at the level we now call world services. We've gone back to the original model described in *The N.A. Tree*: a single board, elected by the conference, would direct service projects which affect the fellowship as a whole. The board would have sufficient authority to effectively administer those services, but would be required to consult with the conference on any questions greatly affecting the fellowship. The board's committees, working with the staff of the board's service corporation, would have primary responsibility for developing new recovery literature, interfacing with national public media and government agencies, creating new service materials, and providing general support for the development of the fellowship. Each year they would meet with regional delegates at the conference, present reports on their activities, describe plans for the future, and ask for direction. Those regional delegates would be elected at annual assemblies of group service representatives, when the groups and their delegates would discuss affairs pertaining to the entire fellowship.

The *Guide to Service* will take an additional step, one we've seen coming since the creation of the first national service assembly a couple of years ago in the United Kingdom. Since its inception, the body we've called the *World Service Conference* has given its attention primarily to services affecting the fellowship in the United States. The conference has done its best to reach out to other countries as well, giving whatever support it could to budding national fellowships. Nonetheless, it has remained a U.S. body that has sponsored some international outreach activities, rather than becoming an international forum. The time appears to be ripe for focussing the work of the North American Service Conference onto its own service needs, and creating a truly international service agency to meet the needs of Narcotics Anonymous worldwide.

The new international agency would hold the rights to the Narcotics Anonymous name, the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Principles, and our Basic Text. It would have two primary functions: to maintain the integrity of the N.A. movement worldwide, and to lend support to new national fellowships. The agency would be directed by a board of delegates from the various national fellowships. The international agency would be funded from royalty fees paid by national fellowships for rights to the Basic Text, and by a "pay as you're able" sort of contribution system from the national fellowships. National fellowships would be free to develop recovery literature, service guides, and a service structure

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committees to the new *conference* committees. Drawing on volunteers from across the United States, the conference committees set about creating new service materials on a wing and prayer.

The trustees' responsibilities for administering the World Service Office were also diminished, though not by actual intent of the World Service Conference. In the course of printing up the 1979 conference-approved revision of the service manual, language describing the World Service Board's authority over the office was not included. In its place was a description of an independent WSO board, entirely responsible for office operations. The oddest part of that bit of history is that nobody--including the trustees--remarked upon the changes, at least at the time. And so by the end of the Seventies, N.A. had gone from having a single primary world service agency to a system with three separate arms.

Conflicts developed among those arms over a variety of issues, pitting the conference committees sometimes against the trustees, sometimes against the World Service Office board, sometimes against other conference committees, and sometimes against all of them all at once. Such chaos was in evidence that, in 1982, the conference asked its outgoing administrative committee to "investigate the A.A. service structure as to how the beneficial aspects of its structure might be adopted by N.A."

The 1983 report on the A.A. structure contained no recommendations and was virtually ignored. At the time there was considerable anti-A.A. sentiment, as well as numerous problems that seemed to be of more immediate urgency. N.A. was changing and growing so quickly that there was virtually no time to think in any very specific terms about the future.

A compilation report on the development of N.A. services was adopted in 1983. That report included both the material originally approved in 1979 and all subsequent actions of the WSC. The report, which became known as the *Temporary Working Guide to our Service Structure*, was accurate in describing what had happened up to that point. But it was clearly not sufficient to guide N.A. services into the future. Sensing the need for something considerably different, yet tired of changing things each year, the 1983 conference instructed the WSC Policy Committee "to rewrite the service structure for approval by the WSC." Such controversy developed in the policy committee, however, that they became unable to proceed. In 1984, the conference reassigned the project to a select committee, today known as the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service.

The select committee's first order of business was to look very closely at the A.A. structure. We rejected the idea of trying to adapt that structure to our needs--not because we didn't think it would work, frankly, but because we couldn't believe the fellowship would buy it. The committee came up with a couple of watered down drafts for general review, but for the most part we were at a standstill. We had no

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will allow Narcotics Anonymous to carry its message effectively, not only in the United States but across the planet.

The committee had a great deal to accomplish this year in order to keep our promised July 1 deadline, and still has a few miles to go before its members can sleep. But our foundation has been laid well with the completion of the Twelve Principles of Service. Drafts of all the material for *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous* are rapidly approaching completion. The committee has scheduled two more working meetings, in mid-May and again in late June, to thoroughly review that material prior to release. Once the *Guide* has been mailed out, we'll be meeting with you in a number of workshops across North America, Europe, and the South Pacific to discuss our work and answer your questions.

On behalf of the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service, I thank you for the support and insight you've shared with us these past five years. I trust that when the work is released in July you'll feel as strongly as we do that it was well worth the wait. All of us have considered it a unique honor and privilege to serve on the committee, and we thank you for allowing us this opportunity to serve.

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