

WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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



An open letter from the trustees concerning the unauthorized printing of the Basic Text

June 29, 1990

In the last few months, certain individuals in the eastern United States have printed a light-blue paperback book containing the first ten chapters of N.A.'s Basic Text (Third Edition, Revised), replacing the material on Traditions Four and Nine with material from the Second Edition text. This action contradicts our Twelve Traditions, and could do much damage to Narcotics Anonymous worldwide. The book they have printed is *not* conference-approved literature, and should not be used, purchased, or distributed by N.A. members, groups, or service committees.

The conference-approved Fifth Edition of the Basic Text has developed as the result of broad consideration within the N.A. Fellowship, represented in six years' worth of World Service Conference decisions. The illicit Basic Text has been printed without consulting any of N.A.'s worldwide decision-making bodies. Further, the unauthorized book has been published in violation of American law and international copyright treaty.

The illegally published book is being sold at a very low price; the conference-approved Basic Text costs eight dollars. Twice, our World Service Conference has considered dropping the price of the text, but has decided not to--for good reason. Proceeds from the sale of the approved text provide 95% of the support needed to continue our worldwide services: starter kits for new groups, assistance for new N.A. communities around the world, translation of our literature into other languages, the development of new N.A. books and pamphlets, and more. If sales of the unauthorized Basic Text take away from the support needed by our worldwide services, Narcotics Anonymous as a whole will suffer greatly.

We want to suggest one simple thing N.A. members can do when confronted with the book itself: *don't take it*. Some members may want to procure copies of the illegal publication for their memorabilia collections, but we encourage them to leave the book entirely alone. If N.A. members, groups, and service committees

refuse to condone the unauthorized printing, if they refuse to accept personal copies, if they refuse to distribute the illicitly-published Basic Text, those behind the illegal book will get the message: N.A. wants them to stop.

To protect the best interests of the fellowship as a whole, legal action has been initiated. If the action already taken does not stop the unauthorized printing of the Basic Text, we will have no recourse but to take the matter to court.

Unauthorized printing--how does it affect N.A.?

One of N.A.'s dearest-held traditions is that of group autonomy. N.A. groups are left free to develop their own understanding of recovery, and are at liberty to conduct their own affairs as they see fit. Groups need restrict their actions only when those actions affect other groups, or when they affect N.A. as a whole. The unauthorized publication of the N.A. Basic Text directly affects the welfare of the entire N.A. Fellowship in two ways.

First, the Basic Text, to a certain extent, *is* our message. It defines what Narcotics Anonymous is, what we do, and how we do it. The unauthorized printing of the text impairs our fellowship's ability to maintain the integrity of our message and our identity.

Our fellowship has spent much effort over the last fifteen years making the World Service Conference what it is today: the single point where decisions significantly affecting the entire N.A. movement can be made. Such decisions include those affecting the content of the Basic Text.

While the conference protects the conceptual integrity of the N.A. message, our world service corporation protects its legal integrity. World Service Office, Inc., holds the copyrights to all N.A. literature on the fellowship's behalf. No one may legally publish the Basic Text without express written permission from N.A. world services. If the fellowship's legal rights to the book are compromised, swift action must be taken. If we don't, we will ultimately lose our ability to maintain the integrity of our message.

If individuals want to change the Basic Text, they should utilize the decision-making process this fellowship has established, leading ultimately to the floor of the World Service Conference. The same applies if they want the legal right to print the Basic Text themselves, whether they wish to publish the Fifth Edition or an altered version of the book. However, when individuals alter and print the Basic Text on their own, without permission, N.A. world services have no choice but to seek legal remedies.

Second, the unauthorized publication of the Basic Text undercuts one of the primary means our fellowship has established for supporting N.A. world services.

Narcotics Anonymous has three world service branches: the World Service Conference, the World Service Board of Trustees, and the World Service Office. Together, they provide a wide variety of services to the N.A. Fellowship: support for "loner" N.A. members, free starter kits for new groups, and assistance for new N.A. communities in dozens of countries; support for P.I. and H&I services in more than 500 areas; development, translation, and production of N.A. literature; and N.A. communications, both within the fellowship and between the fellowship and outside agencies.

Direct contributions from the fellowship account for about 5% of the financial resources needed to maintain our worldwide services. The remainder comes from the sale of N.A. literature. Twice in the last six years, the conference has considered the matter of dropping the cost of literature--once in 1984, and again in 1987--and each time has turned it down. The benefits at the group level produced by a cheaper book would be more than offset by the resulting loss of worldwide services. In fact, the need for funds at the world level is so great that, at the 1990 meeting of the World Service Conference, a number of motions were placed to *raise* the cost of N.A. literature, not lower it. If N.A. world services were deprived of income from literature sales, the fellowship, in turn, would be deprived of a great many of the services we've all come to depend on.

What is being done to stop the unauthorized printing?

The World Service Board of Trustees would prefer to see this matter resolved without recourse to legal remedies, especially since the individuals behind the unauthorized printing of the text are fellow members of Narcotics Anonymous. To this end, we are told, the chairperson of the World Service Office Board of Directors recently contacted one of the individuals involved, asking that the unauthorized printing be stopped. A request was made, in turn, that the matter be discussed with the entire WSO board.

The office board chairperson is agreeable to such a dialogue, but only with the World Service Board of Trustees also present, and only in a public setting. Because the unauthorized printing of the Basic Text has the potential to seriously affect the entire fellowship, the WSO board chairperson and the WSB chairperson feel that discussion of the matter should occur in a setting where the entire fellowship can take part.

We must acknowledge N.A.'s First Tradition: "Our *common* welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. *unity*." The welfare of the entire N.A. Fellowship is affected by N.A.'s ability to maintain the integrity of its message

and its identity, and by N.A.'s ability to continue its worldwide services. We cannot allow the actions or interests of a few individual members to seriously jeopardize the welfare of N.A. as a whole. If we do not respond to the unauthorized printing, we will, in effect, be endorsing it.

The trustees, the WSO Board of Directors, and the Administrative Committee of the World Service Conference bear a collective responsibility to protect the best interests of the entire fellowship in this matter, by whatever appropriate means possible. Key individuals behind the illegal printing and distribution of the Basic Text have been asked to stop of their own accord. Legal cease-and-desist orders have been issued to those individuals and committees known or suspected to be involved. If those orders are not heeded, more serious measures will be taken.

What can you do?

Don't take it.

Some of those who are illicitly publishing and distributing the book are acting on self-will. Such actions move those individuals away from recovery, not toward it. Others who are involved have been misguided, or are simply misinformed concerning the facts of the matter.

The individuals responsible for the illegal book say that they are fulfilling the wishes of the fellowship. If the fellowship does, in fact, want these individuals to print an altered version of the Basic Text, then let the conscience of the fellowship be heard through the World Service Conference. Until then, let the individuals responsible for the unauthorized, illegal printing of the text cease. We have allowed a vocal few to divert us from our primary purpose far too long. It's time to say *enough*.

More on this matter will appear in the *Newsline* and the *Fellowship Report* as more information becomes available. Should you have any questions, thoughts, or concerns regarding either the unauthorized publication of the Basic Text or this report, please write us:

**World Service Board of Trustees
P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, California 91409-9999
U.S.A.**