

1998

TRANSITION

GROUP

REPORT ON

RESOLUTION 'A'



**Narcotics Anonymous
World Service Conference**

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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: 26 March, 1998
TO: WSC participants
FROM: Transition Group
RE: Report on Resolution A

Attached is the Transition Group report on Resolution A. Resolution A was adopted in principle at WSC '96 and read:

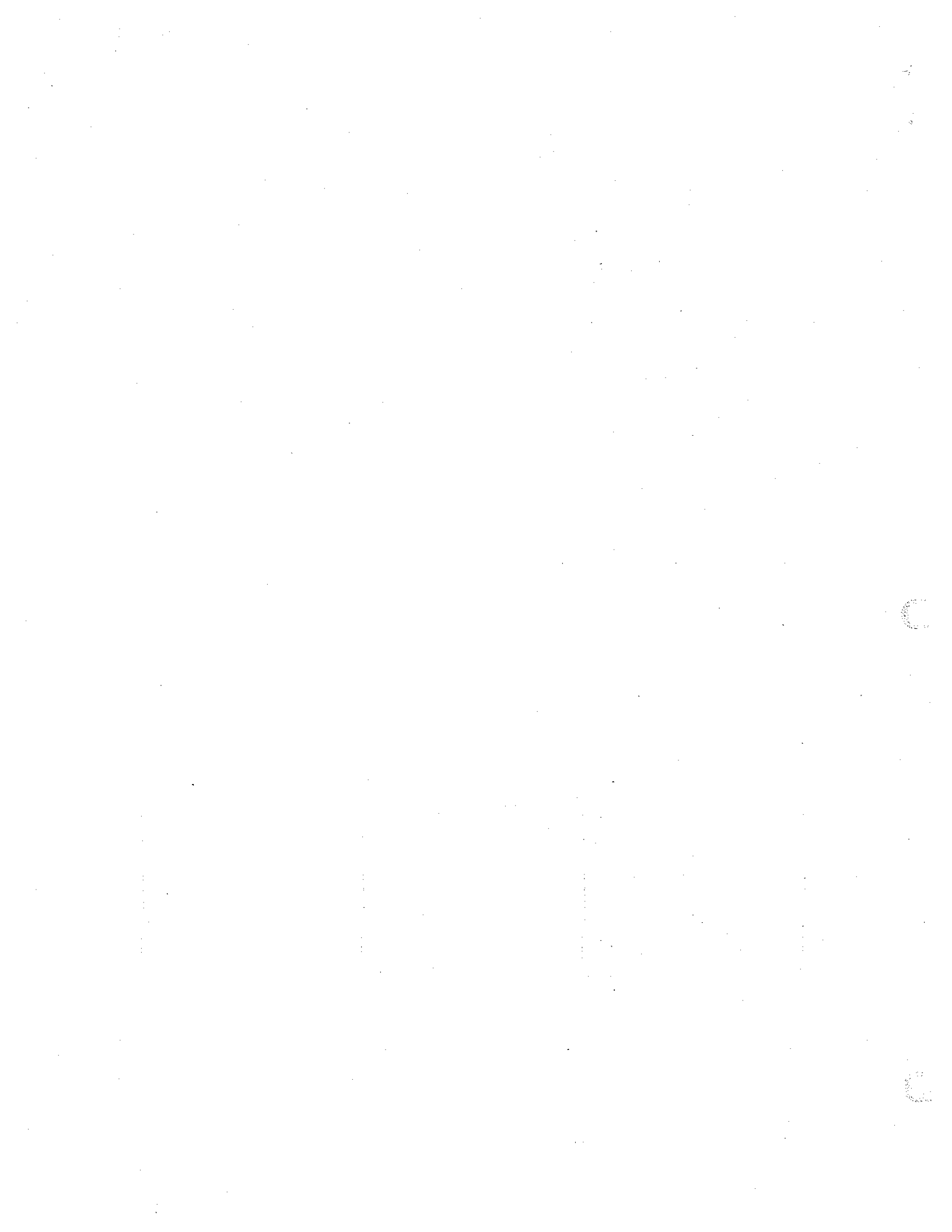
"To approve *in principle* a change in participation at a new WSC to achieve the following objectives:

1. to reduce the total number of representatives
2. to provide for equal representation from all geographic entities; and,
3. to encourage a consensus-based decision-making process"

As we reported throughout this past conference year, the Transition Group is forwarding this report to act as a summary of activity related to Resolution A during the inventory/resolution process. We hope that this report will stand as the basis for all future discussions regarding Resolution A.

There will be an opportunity to discuss this report at the upcoming World Service Conference sometime after the business session has been completed. Also, as the conclusion of this report indicates, the World Service Conference may prioritize Resolution A as a discussion topic for Conference Year 1998-99. In any case, the one thing that is clear is that, whatever is to occur regarding Resolution A and any changes to representation and participation at a new World Service Conference must arise from the regional delegates and their respective regions. We recognize, of course, that the conference has already expressed approval of the principles embodied in Resolution A. However, without such a groundswell of grassroots support for such changes, we can probably anticipate little in the way of actual implementation of those principles.

In conclusion, we hope that our having gathered all this information into one packet will serve the future World Service Conference as a resource for any future work regarding Resolution A.



Transition Group—Resolution A Report

Introduction

The purpose of the following report is to provide conference participants, and all concerned members, with the background material relevant to Resolution A. Included is a summary of all that has been said and done regarding Resolution A during the past five years as the inventory/resolution process has taken place. We hope that this information will serve as a resource to whatever group assumes the further work necessary to the successful development of a new WSC that will achieve the ideals described in Resolution A. We hope as well that this report will help provide the basis of that future work in the years to come.

The issues of representation and participation at the World Service Conference have been examined and reexamined by world service participants for over a decade. In the September 1987 *Fellowship Report* the Select Committee had actually proposed a system of national and continental conferences that they believed would help address the growing problems that were being encountered by NA communities outside the United States and Canada. Service materials that weren't relevant to other countries' laws and customs, cultural differences, and the overwhelming problems that world services had experienced with our early literature translations efforts—all of these increasing difficulties demonstrated that yes, we were growing, but that we could also expect significant growing pains as our fellowship became international.

Composite Group—1993-1995

It would be more than five years after the Select Committee's 1987 report before the World Service Conference would begin a process encouraging widespread discussion of both representation and participation at our WSC among local NA communities. In April 1993, the WSC created the Composite Group (CG), a group of twelve trusted servants whose task was to develop inventory "tools" that would allow world services to conduct a self-examination, known as the world services inventory. From May 1993 to March 1995, the CG facilitated a comprehensive inventory of world services. During this two-year period, they surveyed the fellowship regarding the effectiveness of world services. They developed inventory tools for use by world service boards and committees in performing their own self-assessment. And they also compiled this information and conducted small group sessions at WSC '94 so that the conference could assess its own effectiveness. The results of the Composite Group's research were eventually summarized in Book One of the group's 1995 report.

The information most relevant to the issues surrounding Resolution A came from the 1994 WSC's self-assessment. During this phase of the inventory process, WSC participants split into seventeen small groups in order to address a series of questions developed by the Composite Group. The results weren't too surprising, insofar as they simply confirmed what most people had already assumed to be many of the difficulties associated with the size and the processes of the WSC. Perhaps most significant was the fact that we finally had something more or less definitive that said, yes, we really do need to change some things, and here is what we need to address.

The problems identified during the WSC '94 self-assessment can be divided into three categories that correspond to the three numbered sub-elements of Resolution A: (1) The number of representatives at the WSC; (2) The need for more equitable representation at the conference; and (3) The desire to move away from our motion-oriented style of business and toward a more discussion-driven, consensus-based decision-making process.

1) The number of representatives at the WSC

Relevant to the number of representatives at the WSC, 1994 conference participants stated that the "representation at WSC exceeds participation" -- "Many RSRs attend the conference, but only a small portion of them participate. This is due to financial difficulties, language barriers, and transportation problems. As a result, there is a large silent population of our fellowship" (CG 60).

Related to this issue of so many participants at the conference, participants stated that the "length of WSC sessions" is a problem due to so many people on the floor, which creates "inhuman working conditions, with nine- to twelve-hour days and no breaks," which in turn results in "stress and animosity" (CG 60).

2) The need for more equitable representation at the conference

Regarding this second element, conference participants stated that "There is a decision-making imbalance at WSC due to a disproportionate number of USA RSRs in the voting body. . . . USA voting participants outnumber voting participants from outside the USA, creating an inequality in the decision-making process. As a result, a power and control imbalance exists, promoting a colonial attitude" (CG 72).

Participants also perceived that "WSC business methods exclude non-English-speaking participants. . . . Business sessions move too quickly. Not all concepts at issue are easy to translate. The style of the CAR is difficult to understand. The CAR is too big" (CG 72). Additionally, participants saw "Inequality between voting participants due to lack of knowledge. . . . Lack of an adequate orientation to the WSC results in some participants being more informed than others. A language barrier causes some participants to be less informed than others. Lack of translated world service communications perpetuates this inequality" (CG 63).

And, finally, participants noted a demonstrable "Lack of diversity in NA leadership. . . . The conference needs to increase cultural diversity among its leaders without compromising on office requirements and experience. Lack of personal funds to serve in a leadership position shouldn't be reason not to select someone" (CG 65).

3) The desire to move toward a more discussion-driven, consensus-based decision making process.

This element received more direct comment than any other in the 1994 WSC self-assessment. Participants noted a "Lack of time at WSC for informal discussions" wherein "there is too little time set aside at World Service Conference meetings for informal, non-business-debate, small group, issue-oriented sharing sessions" (CG 60). Participants also believed that "Ego. Personalities. Best Pitch. [And] Lobbying" are big problems in the way we do business, stating that "Turf wars and personal agenda interfere with conference interactions and our conduct of

business. Parliamentary procedure is used inappropriately by some of those especially well-versed in it, and cannot be used by those who are not experts, impeding equal participation in the process. 'Mic hogs' dominate the debate and impair the process" (CG 60).

The 1994 WSC also identified "Personal, Regional, and committee agenda[s], both stated and unstated," as significant problems, wherein "struggle and competition, rather than cooperation and mutual support, characterize conference proceedings. Regional 'wants' rather than the interests of the whole fellowship is what motivates many participants. The conference has a tendency to micromanage world services from the WSC floor, demanding that everything be done 'just this way' according to various participants' specific visions of how things should be done. Some participants even withhold relevant information in the process of debate lest that information divert the body from the decision they favor" (CG 61).

Parliamentary procedure and our rules of order were also identified as significant problems: "The conference is such that everything must be either right or wrong—no neutrals can emerge from it. The process lends itself to micromanagement from the conference floor. 'Mic hogs' and Robert's Rules aficionados dominate the process and force the agenda" (CG 61). Meanwhile, WSC business sessions were defined as often "difficult to comprehend" . . . because the "WSC gets caught up in parliamentary procedure. WSC business sessions are difficult for both English- and non-English-speaking participants to follow" (CG 61). "Business sessions, politics, [and] 'motion madness'" create a situation in which "Politics divert the conference from handling motions in a calm, considered manner. The agenda is dominated by North American issues. 'Motion madness'—an obsession with making, debating, amending, and voting on business motions—is compounded by a 'taking care of business' mindset; the format of the *Conference Agenda Report* reinforces this. Too much time is spent on procedural debates" (CG 61).

Finally, the spirit of competition that characterizes much of what occurs at the WSC was seen as a serious problem. "Decision making at WSC is based on majority rules, rather than consensus," participants stated. "Decision making at WSC is often limited to three pro's and three con's, rather than open discussion. In addition, numbers play an important role in the passage or failure of motions. For what is perceived to be an important decision, the question is asked, 'How many does it take to pass?' WSC debates and votes rather than discussing and building consensus. The conference process of 'majority rules' is not spiritual by its very essence. Voting should be unnecessary" (62). "The voting process is a competitive, not reflective, process. . . . Motion makers influence the process with their personalities and their skills as salespeople" (CG 62). Participants also stated that "The current CAR format promotes disunity—The motion-oriented CAR format fosters a sense of belonging for some individuals, but for others it creates disunity" (CG 62).

The Resolution Group—1995-1996

Based upon the problems that were identified during the Composite Group phase of the world services inventory, the Resolution Group (RG), appointed by the WSC in 1995, was charged with the responsibility of providing general solutions to world services' identified problems for conference consideration during the 1996 WSC. The RG presented a series of resolutions to the WSC in the 1996 *Conference Agenda Report*, and Resolutions A, B, C2, E, F, and G were adopted by the World Service Conference. Regarding the problems noted above relevant to the issues of

representation and participation at the World Service Conference, the RG developed Resolution A as their response to address the identified problems:

Resolution A:

To approve *in principle* a change in participation at a new WSC to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. to reduce the total number of representatives**
- 2. to provide for equal representation from all geographic entities; and,**
- 3. to encourage a consensus-based decision-making process**

The RG set about developing a solution to the many problems identified with the World Service Conference, including the issues of what was perceived to be too many participants on the floor, as well as the motion-oriented, and therefore divisive, mindset of the conference's business sessions. What they eventually proposed was to "downsize" the WSC by changing the number of participants, as well as changing the nature of their participation at a "new" WSC. In essence, the Resolution Group envisioned a limited number of what they called "Geographic Entities," that would replace the current regional representational format and that would, through a variety of means, effect the changes necessitated by the adoption of Resolution A. However, as the RG admitted, they never as a group "discussed many specifics about these entities," though the group had no doubt that the issue would "be an important focus of the group to follow. . ." (RG 39).

The RG envisioned a new World Service Conference that did not "concern itself with detailed matters of implementation or execution of projects, but rather . . . [focused] on matters of strategic direction and long range planning." Its primary duty would be to "review the strategic plans submitted by the World Board, and [ratify] them or [call] for changes" (40). The RG also believed that this new conference should provide "a forum for establishing and maintaining the worldwide unity of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole . . . [in which] substantial time is devoted to sharing experience, strength, and hope among all the participants" (RG 40).

The RG believed that these changes would address many of the World Service Conference problems that had been identified by the inventory process. In their report to conference participants in 1996, they argued that their geographic entities would "reduce the number of representative participants at the WSC, thereby decreasing the current participation problems attributable to the size of our current system. They will also make the possibility of full funding for all conference participants a realizable goal. Most importantly, they will allow North American issues to be dealt with in a national or continental forum, and thus 'free-up' the WSC and enable it to finally deal with the worldwide issues which will increasingly face our fellowship as a whole" (RG 48-49).

However, the difficulties associated with actually implementing such sweeping changes to representation and participation at the World Service Conference would come into sharper focus as the Transition Group began to work on developing models for the new WSC during the 1996-1997 conference year.

Transition Group—1996-present

The Transition Group was appointed at the 1996 WSC to develop detailed proposals based upon the resolutions that had been adopted, thereby moving the conference into the final phase of the inventory/resolution process. Regarding Resolution A, we recognized pretty early on that the RG's work had been based upon the assumption that maintaining a unified world services as well as a unified global fellowship was a priority. The description of our service symbol, put forward in our Basic Text, which includes the idea that "the greater the Base, . . . the higher the point of freedom," seemed to have been the basis for the RG's Resolution A proposal.

In our report to conference participants prior to the 1997 WSC, in fact, we wrote that we saw "great potential benefit from the unity that would arise from maintaining our worldwide focus into the twenty-first century. As the description of our symbol in our Basic Text suggests, 'as we grow in unity in numbers and in fellowship,' the freedom that accompanies our fellowship's size, strength, and commitment to a common purpose can only increase. In this way, the Resolution Group's vision—of a unified world services structure and a fully connected and participatory global fellowship—is inspirational. We applaud their idealism and the loftiness of their goal" (TG 8).

However, we found considerable difficulty in both trying to agree upon a single interpretation of Resolution A amongst ourselves, as well as in developing a model for a new WSC that seemed both practical and in keeping with the spirit of the resolution. We wrote of this dilemma in our report prior to WSC '97 as well: "Whether or not the attainment of such a vision is in fact achievable is another matter entirely, and our own struggles with its practicality are evident throughout [our report]" (TG 8).

Difficulties of Interpretation and Definition

One of the first problems we had was in trying to agree upon a single definition of many of the words in Resolution A. We wrote in our WSC '97 report that "this resolution presented us with a series of challenges, including (1) the difficulty of defining the word 'equal,' (2) the potential problems associated with adding yet another layer to our service structure (as well as with providing the resources, both human and financial, necessary to the proper functioning of a new service tier), (3) the difficulties we experienced with attempting to define the term 'consensus-based decision making,' and (4) the distinction between the terms 'representative' and 'delegate'" (TG 8).

In our report to conference participants, we offered no definitive answers to any of these questions: Rather, we believed that these issues required broader fellowship discussion. In fact, we continue to believe that broader discussion across the fellowship will need to occur before we can move into any proposed representational structure. As we wrote in our report, "The World Service Conference has been discussing the ideas contained in resolutions B through G adopted at WSC '96 for years. The concepts of a single board, a human resources panel, a unified budget, and a downsized committee structure are therefore familiar to most of us. Moreover, resolutions B through G reflect that basic familiarity in the clear and relatively narrow direction that they contain. Resolution A, however, contains ideas that have not been discussed by either the conference or the fellowship at large in any detail at all" (TG 9). We

believe that such discussions will need to continue, for only broad-based awareness and effort across our entire membership can make the eventual changes in WSC representation possible.

Ongoing Fellowship-wide Discussion Necessary

We also believe that the issues we struggled with in our own process will be some of the major stumbling blocks standing in the way of implementing Resolution A. For example, we have heard many different beliefs expressed in our group and in the input we have received about what "equal representation" means. Along with this, issue, the issues of a new service tier, and of what "consensus-based decision-making" really means, will remain issues in need of clarification before Resolution A can become a reality.

As a resource for the fellowship, and for the group charged with the responsibility of continuing with the work of further developing Resolution A, we have included below much of the discussion and issues first presented in our March 1997 report regarding the stumbling blocks that we encountered. A lot of this material is presented verbatim from that report, while other parts are paraphrased. We hope this material will serve as a kind of reference point for any future discussions regarding some of the unclear and/or confusing language within Resolution A.

Equal Representation from Geographic Entities

Regarding the issue of attempting to define "equal representation," we did not believe that the conference asked us to change the very nature of representation in Narcotics Anonymous to one of literal democracy; one group meaning one vote (though we did examine this direction in our discussions). Thus, even though the fellowship in the USA represents 85% of the worldwide fellowship in number of groups; and even though the USA represents a similar proportion of the fellowship's areas and regions, we believe that "equal" will have to be based on other factors in addition to a simple democratic majority. If we are to build a world service structure and conference that are truly representative of the many cultures that comprise us — and concerns that will increasingly face us — over the coming years as our fellowship continues to grow and mature, other factors such as language and culture will need to be considered as well.

Adding a New Service "Tier"

A second area that presented us with significant difficulty was that of adding a new layer, or "tier" of service to our service structure. Many of the discussions during the inventory addressed the distance separating the groups from world services, as well as the communication problems associated with that distance. We have heard many ideas about how to make the conference itself more responsive to the groups by transforming its focus, format, and decision-making processes. Yet Resolution A presents us with a dilemma: how is it possible to make the conference more responsive to the needs of the groups, and improve the communication between the groups and world services, while simultaneously moving the two further apart? Examining the potential consequences of inserting another representative layer into our service structure was the second difficulty addressed in our discussions.

In addition to these communication concerns, another primary consideration in the implementation of Resolution A is the current reality of our fellowship's limited resources, both human and financial, at all levels of service. We do not claim to have the answer to this

question, but we do know that creating another layer of service will mean creating another layer of expense and administrative time and energy.

A concern related to the expense associated with the new layer of service is the expense associated with representation at the new WSC. One of the ideas that we have not pursued but which we will have to discuss in the future is that of cost equalization. Should the cost of sending a delegate to the World Service Conference be the responsibility of the conference? Or of the region or district? The Transition Group supports the philosophical premise of cost equalization, but we are also aware of the difficulty of attempting to implement it fairly. If all delegates pay an equal amount to attend the conference, for example, what happens when someone cannot contribute their share? Is everyone then prevented from attending at all? These and other questions will need to be the subject of considerable fellowship thought and discussion if Resolution A is ever to become a practical reality.

"Consensus-based Decision Making"

The notion of "consensus based decision making" was the third source of considerable discussion and debate among TG members, as well as within the input we received. Some members believed that consensus-based decision making means discussions that conclude with the vast *majority* of the members coming to agreement. Others believed that such discussions must conclude with *unanimity*. While we believe that unanimity is something that conference participants should always strive for, we are not proposing that the World Service Conference be limited by a demand for it. Our ninth concept reminds service bodies to carefully consider all viewpoints. We believe that, for the purposes of our service bodies, consensus must be based on considering all viewpoints while at the same time trying to find the common ground that every participant can support, even when the eventual decision is not exactly as every participant may have desired. However, we also believe it will be necessary for the fellowship to discuss this issue, and be prepared to forward ideas and recommendations as to how the "consensus-based decision-making" described in Resolution A can become a practical reality at the "new" World Service Conference.

Four Models for Resolution A Proposed at WSC '97

In spite of the difficulties that we experienced as described above, at WSC '97 we nevertheless proposed four possible models to serve as a basis for the discussions about Resolution A at the 1997 World Service Conference. Our hope was that by providing the framework and impacts of different representative models, we would be able to gain direction from conference participants so that we could then develop one comprehensive proposal for consideration at the 1997 world services meeting, and, after review by the fellowship, adoption at the 1998 World Service Conference.

As this report demonstrates, we were never able to gather such a clear response from WSC '97 participants. While most participants felt that change was necessary, the form that such change should take was a matter of much discussion and disagreement at the 1997 WSC. Once again, for the purpose of providing the conference with a "record" of actions pertaining to Resolution A, we are providing below a summary of the four models that we presented to the conference in 1997, as well as some discussion regarding those models.

The four proposed models were presented in order — from the one most like our present system to the model that most differed from our present system. Models One and Two therefore offered the least amount of change from what we presently have, while Model Three was farther removed from our system's present configuration. Finally, Model Four stood as the furthest departure from the world services system as we know it today.

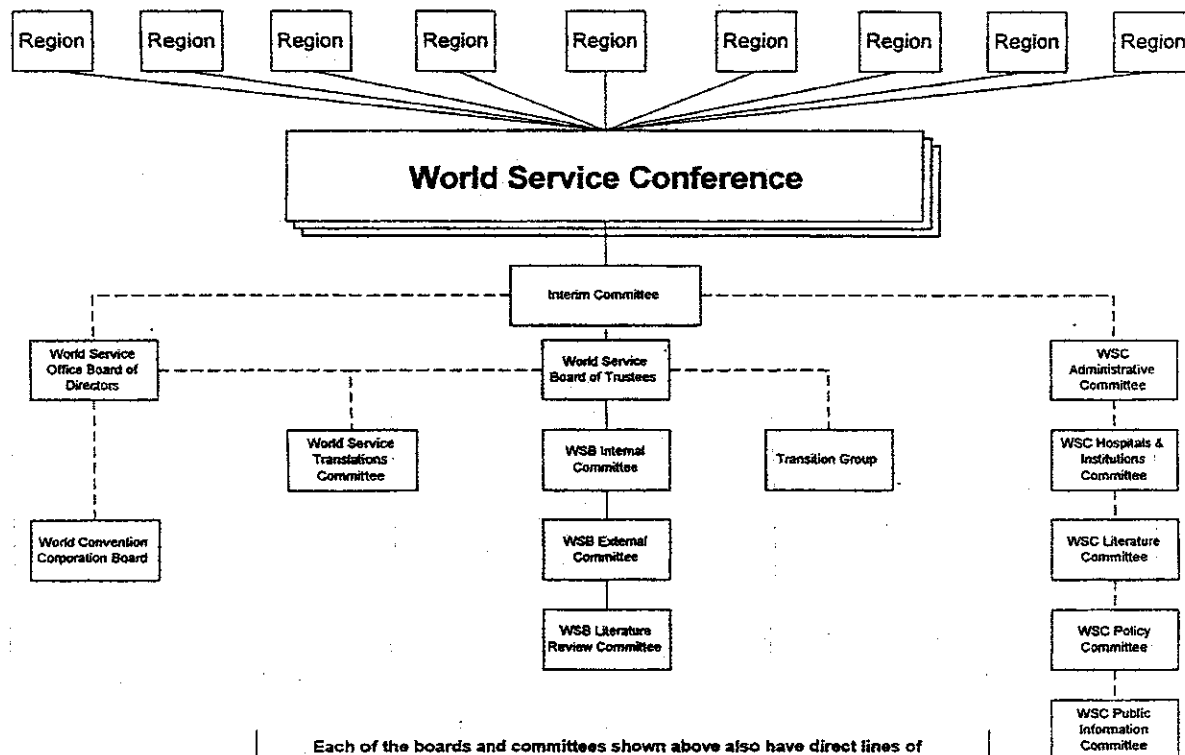
Current World Service System as of WSC 1997

We are providing the current model of world services to assist in your discussions. Although the conference is currently considering a proposal to change the configuration of world service boards and committee, the representation at the World Service Conference will remain the same.

World Service Conference Participation

The number of seated delegates at WSC 1997 was ninety-four (94) with eighty seven (87) actually present at that conference. Those eight-seven (87) delegates represented twenty-six (26) countries and one (1) US territory. There were an additional twenty (20) board and committee members voting in all but old business. This would change to twenty four (24) World Board members if our proposal is adopted at WSC 1998. Thus up to one hundred fourteen (114) World Service Conference members participate in the consensus process during the conference in our existing system and up to one hundred eighteen (118) if the World Board is adopted.

World Service Structure as of WSC 1997



In 1997, 87 regions were represented out of the 94 regions seated at the World Service Conference. There were 107 total voting participants with representation from 26 countries and 1 US territory.

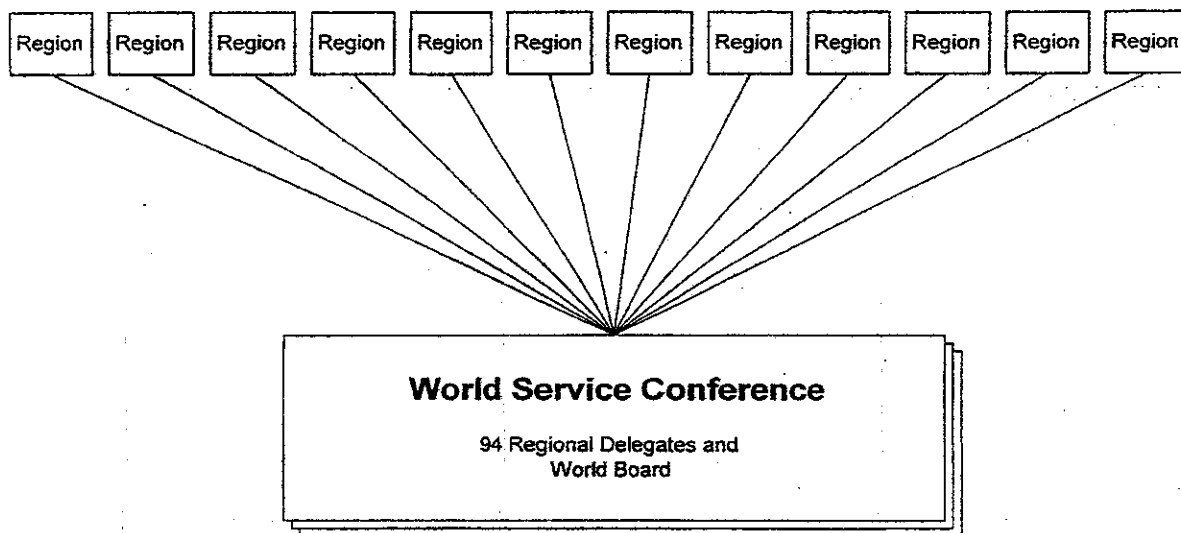
Model One - Non-US Country/US Regional Configuration

1. One delegate from each country outside of the United States and Canada—currently twenty-four (24) delegates.
2. One delegate from each presently seated US and Canadian region—for a permanent number of seventy (70) delegates.
 - The regions from the United States and Canada would be frozen at present levels in this proposal.
 - New regions could form but they would have to meet with their old region to send one delegate to the World Service Conference.
 - The only new regions that would be considered for recognition and seating at the WSC would be those regions from outside the United States and Canada that represent a country.

Model One - World Service Conference Participation

The total currently proposed number of delegates is ninety four (94). There are also twenty four (24) World Board members. Thus up to one hundred eighteen (118) World Service Conference members participate in the consensus process during the conference.

Model One



US and Canadian delegates - frozen at current level of 70
 plus 24 current representatives of other countries
 Total of 94 delegates

Groups and areas are not included in these diagrams purposefully. The Transition Group is not charged with work that affects that part of the service structure directly.

Model Two - Non-US Country/US State Configuration

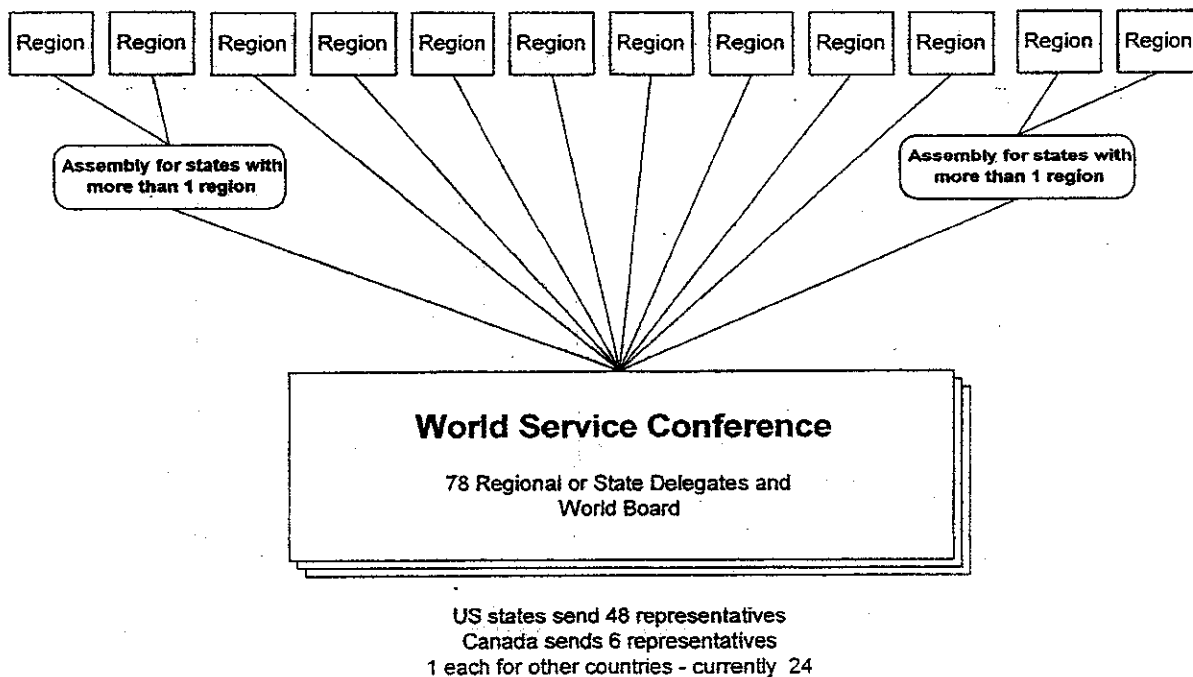
The recommended representation at Model Two’s new WSC is as follows:

1. One delegate from each country outside of the United States, with the exception of Canada, which will continue to hold its six delegates – for a current total of thirty (30) delegates.
2. One delegate from each US state – for a total of forty-eight (48) US delegates.
 - States with more than one regional service committee would need to elect one delegate
 - California and New York would have two delegates each due to their number of groups and their geographical size
 - The six New England states; Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine; would elect 2 delegates to serve the entire area due to their close proximity and their number of groups

Model Two - World Service Conference Participation

The total currently proposed number of delegates is seventy-eight (78). There are also twenty four (24) World Board members. Thus up to one-hundred two (102) World Service Conference members participate in the consensus process during the conference.

Model Two



Groups and areas are not included in these diagrams purposefully. The Transition Group is not charged with work that affects that part of the service structure directly.

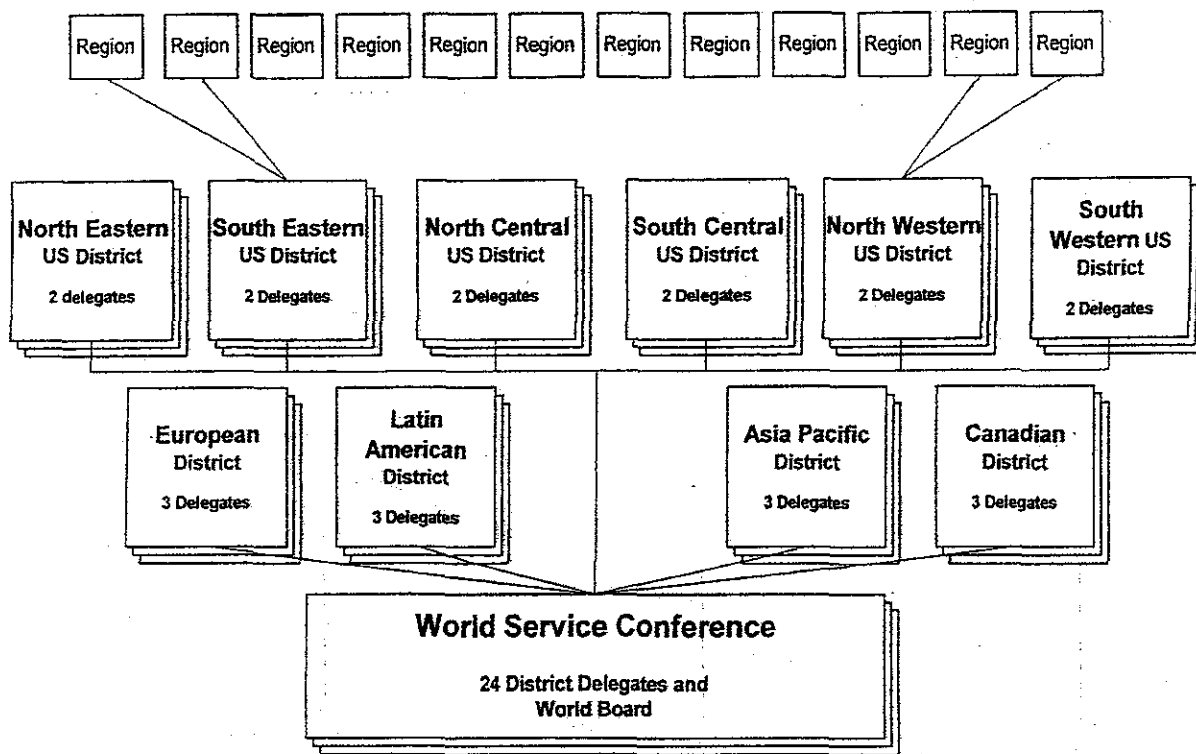
Model Three—District Configuration and Representation

1. Three (3) from each non-US district. These have been identified as four (4); Europe, Pacific Rim, Latin America, and Canada.
2. Two (2) from each US district. These have been identified as six (6); Northeastern US, Southeastern US, North Central US, South Central US, Southwestern US, Northwestern US

Model Three—World Service Conference Participation

The total currently proposed number of delegates is twenty four (24). There are also twenty four (24) World Board members. These forty eight (48) World Service Conference members participate in the consensus-building process during the conference.

Model Three



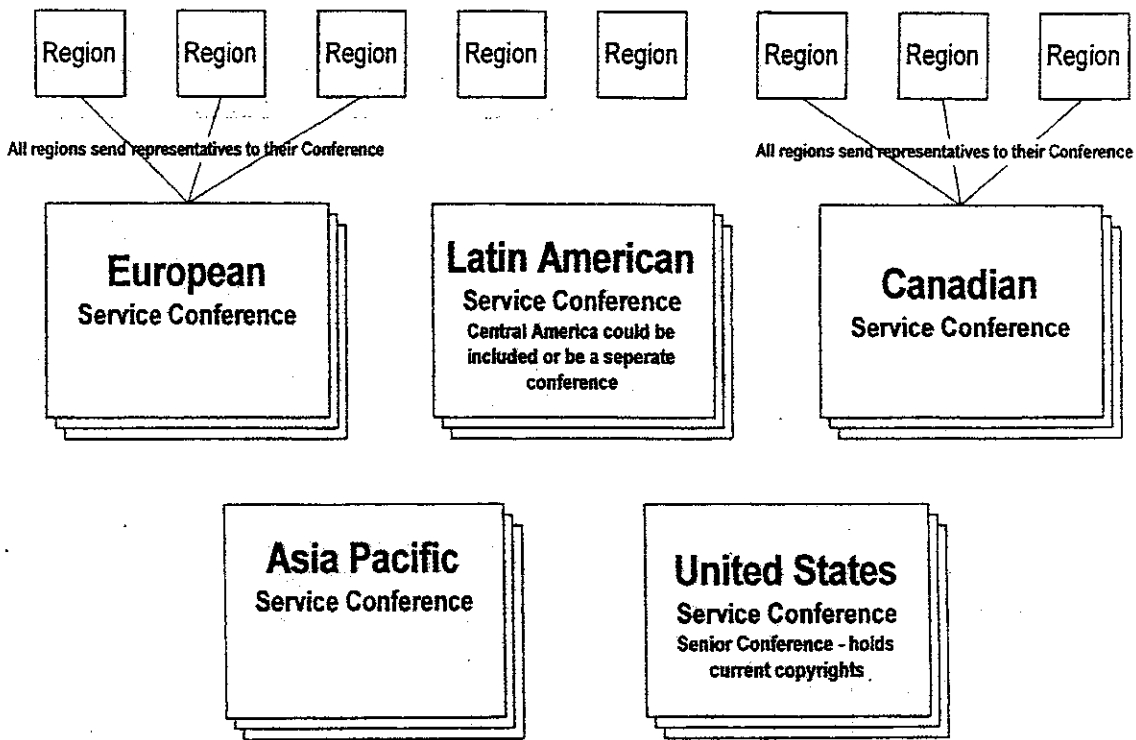
All regions send delegates to a district and all districts are represented at the World Service Conference.

Model Four

For Model Four, the Transition Group proposed a system of conferences defined by recognizable, existing geo-political boundaries. The proposed conferences would be the United States, Canada, Europe, Latin America, possibly Central America and Asia-Pacific. These conference would be attended and supported by the regions within their geographic boundaries.

The conferences would come together every 3-5 years at a world service sharing session to discuss issues and seek avenues of cooperation, and the administrative responsibilities associated with this sharing session would rotate among the various conferences.

Model Four



World Service Sharing Session

held every 3 - 5 years

Models One, Two, Three, and Four—Discussion

Models One and Two

Models One and Two presented a world service conference that is most like our current WSC, particularly with regard to the actual NA communities represented there, as well as their present method of representation. Even though Model One relied essentially upon the existing regional system of representation and Model Two relied upon a state-based representational system, the key element of these models was their fundamental similarity to our current system—there is no new district, continental, or zonal layer of services that would necessitate a fundamentally different representational strategy on the part of local NA communities.

In fact, the rationale for Models One and Two argued for the desirability of not adding an additional layer of administration and services such as we would see in Model Three. Thus one of the purposes of these two models was to keep the regions connected to the World Service Conference and the World Service Conference directly responsible to the regions without an intervening layer of services, administration, and expense. The biggest changes necessary to implement Models One and Two would be: (1) the new format of the World Service Conference; (2) the expanded role of the delegate from the current RSR/RD responsibilities, and (3) the reduction in the overall number of conference participants from our present system.

Model Three

Model Three was a further step away from our current conference. The primary rationale here was to develop a model most in keeping with the wording of Resolution A, adopted at the 1996 World Service Conference. The strengths of this model are that (1) It allows for the geographical entities outlined in the Resolutions Group's proposals by essentially utilizing the existing zonal boundaries that have begun to develop in our fellowship; and (2) It allows for a kind of "equal" representation as recommended in Resolution A.

Like Models One and Two, Model Three also affirmed the essential value of a unified global fellowship united in purpose, as well as in services, by an inclusive and participatory service system. While geographic districts should certainly maintain their autonomy with regard to the provision of local services, they would also strive in Model Three to continue to share in the essential unity of our fellowship by participating in a globally focused world service system.

Model Three also affirms that the majority of actual service provision should occur at the regional and areas levels—that world level service activities should consist primarily of the formulation of broad philosophical discussions, debate and initiatives which culminate in a comprehensive plan for ongoing direction of fellowship development, as well as in specific projects which result in new literature and service materials directly relevant to our membership's needs and requests. By keeping the focus of world services concentrated upon conceptual, philosophical, and policy issues, the emphasis within our local communities should be to renew and revitalize service provision at the local level by decreasing local NA communities' focus on world level issues and reliance upon world level solutions to local problems. In this way, the addition of a "new" layer of service, in the form of districts, would primarily allow for a reliable means of communication and representation on the world level, as actual services (such as H&I, PI, and Outreach) are supported and provided "in the trenches"—that is, by our members in their local NA communities.

"Equal" Representation and Model Three

One of the primary elements of Resolution A was the notion of *equality of representation* among our conference's participants. It has been suggested that our World Service Conference is really not representative of either the populations or the issues that now comprise and confront our worldwide fellowship. The Transition Group, in attempting to define the word "equal" in Resolution A, came up with six general points of agreement as criteria that would help to define "equal" as it related to representation at the new World Service Conference. Those six criteria were Culture, Geography, Size, Language, Needs, and Experience. While these characteristics are defined in detail below, our hope here was to emphasize that, in Model Three, we believe we have actually developed a model for world service representation that is as fair as possible, given the limitations of our fellowship's currently diverse population and its varying levels of clean time and service experience in different parts of the world.

In this way, we developed not only a means of determining which districts would currently be represented at the new WSC, but also the criteria by which any prospective new districts could be seated (or, conversely, denied seating) at the new World Service Conference. Such criteria (be they the ones we have developed, or some other) would be our fellowship's first collective step into a more globally oriented worldwide structure that could offer full participation (as well as the strength and experience that accompany such participation) to our members from around the world.

Considerations for Creating New Districts

In identifying the proposed district configuration, the following six criteria were used. We applied as many of these as possible in developing our proposal. The conference would consider similar criteria in recognizing new districts.

1. *Cultural* — members within the proposed district have a common bond to foster cohesiveness.
2. *Geographic* — members within the proposed district have the ability to travel to district meetings and to have district membership within a reasonable distance.
3. *Size* — the number of groups in each proposed district would be somewhat balanced with existing districts
4. *Language* — members within the proposed district speak a common language
5. *Needs* — local regions share similar needs in terms of fellowship development
6. *Experience* — each proposed district has some experienced members

(Note: Funding World Services)

During our lengthy discussions, we assumed that this model would require an additional layer of service that would actually provide services, information, and administrative guidance. Based on this assumption, the most obvious downside of this model that continually presented an apparently insurmountable wall was one simple question: "How could all this be funded?" The expenses associated with an additional layer of services, as well as the necessity for some kind of funding method to make WSC participation affordable for all districts, seemed so potentially costly that we could not see any reasonable hope of paying for it within our current fund flow system. While, in principle, we are in favor of the idea of a unified worldwide service structure, our discussions have raised serious doubts about its fiscal practicality.

Model Four: Material and Spiritual Cost

This fourth model was based on the belief that the material and spiritual cost of maintaining a worldwide structure cannot be sustained by the fellowship over the long term. Materially, the responsibility of attempting to serve a growing global fellowship has already begun to outstrip the fellowship's collective financial resources. The expenses associated with the annual meeting (as well as its administrative support throughout the year), along with the expenses of maintaining international branches of the World Service Office, deplete whatever resources are provided by literature proceeds. There is no reason to believe that this financial situation will improve. In fact, it seems reasonable to assume that it will only continue to worsen as our fellowship comes of age in other parts of the world.

The Spiritual Cost

The spiritual cost of a worldwide structure may prove even more potentially destructive than the material. Although the NA program is universal, cultural and social differences will not allow for effective worldwide decision-making without diverting us, collectively, from our primary purpose. That cultural differences and expectations exist between us is undeniable. Unfortunately, it may be that the time needed for each of us to comprehend and overcome such differences will prove counterproductive in the end. We may, in fact, spend so much time attempting to create ways for us to simply work together that our shared responsibility to carry the message—mandated by our Fifth Tradition—may well be lost as we struggle to simply find mutually agreeable ways to make collective decisions. Indeed, some members feel that we have already arrived at this roadblock at the world level, and that the situation is worsening.

"Universalism" and Homogeneity: Diluting Our Message

Another grave concern related to these difficulties with finding a mutually agreeable way to proceed is the fact that, in order for a worldwide service structure to produce literature and service materials relevant to our entire membership, such materials would have to be so "generic" as to effectively dilute any real message or value they might otherwise have offered to individual addicts. We all believe that the fundamentals and principles of our recovery are the same throughout the world. Even so, because of the growing cultural differences among us, the focus of world services would, in its attempt to be everything for everyone, be *mandated* to increasing homogeneity. Such "universalism" might well result in the potential loss of local experiences, interpretation, and application in our literature and service materials. Our program needs to be expressed in each community's local language, relating local experience, to be most effective. The identification process and empathy so necessary to our recovery from addiction, which can only derive from addicts sharing their own experiences with each other in their own language and within shared cultural limits and expectations, could well be lost.

Structural Problems: Taking Responsibility and Supporting Decisions

Our attempt to maintain a unified world structure also contains structural problems that impact our system's overall practicality as well. If, as some members have argued, the groups are already too far removed from the decision-making process at the world level to feel responsible for upholding the decisions it produces, then how will they be able to understand or take responsibility for their services if they become even further removed by the proposed new layer of bureaucracy? Moreover, such a feeling of separation from the decision making process may also further alienate them from the actual meaning and application of decisions which are

made. Such alienation can only mean that members and groups will become increasingly unwilling to support any such decisions either materially or spiritually.

Promoting Local Responsibility

Of course, the implication of this argument suggests that continental autonomy will promote local responsibility. It certainly seems logical to suggest that, when members are better able to see the importance of their role in a decision making process that directly affects them, they will then feel more responsible for supporting the decisions they feel themselves to have had a clear hand in deciding. Unfortunately, our collective experience at the regional and area levels may seem to belie this argument to some extent. Nevertheless, which makes better sense? To believe that members will be more willing to support a local decision making body in which they have direct participatory rights? Or to create a service body three times removed from the groups whose decisions may seem only distantly relevant to more localized issues and concerns?

NA's Intellectual Properties and the United States Service Conference

In order to protect our fellowship's collective intellectual properties, their copyrights must be held by a legal entity. In our fellowship, that means a legal entity that is directly responsible to a service body. Registering and protecting copyrighted material in every country around the world is extremely costly. The United States' NA community represents 85 to 90% of our fellowship's groups, areas, and regions, and, at least for the present time, would be the logical choice as the copyright holder to protect our fellowship's assets. Not only does the US currently represent the bulk of our world service donations, but they also have the most experience within our fellowship of protecting its intellectual properties. On behalf of the worldwide fellowship, the conference serving the US fellowship would therefore act as the senior conference. Thus, in addition to its responsibilities to the US regions, it would hold:

- the authority to grant permission to print and distribute all existing fellowship approved literature and future translations of that literature.
- the authority to approve for publication all translations of existing fellowship approved literature.
- the responsibility to serve the groups not already served by an existing conference.

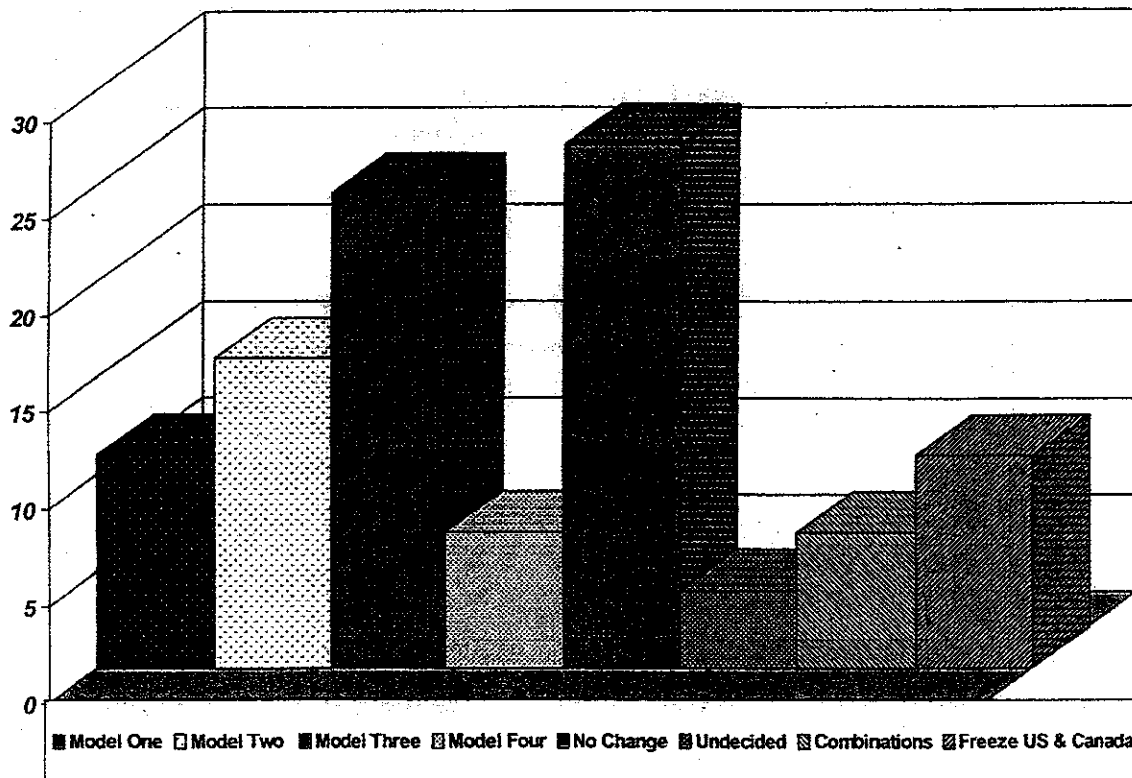
Many of the details about literature production and service offices would need to be left to future decisions by the individual conferences. Their decisions could then be worked out with the US conference and US board.

Small Groups from WSC '97

All four of the models that we developed were presented to WSC participants prior to WSC '97, and a total of nine small groups answered a few questions developed by the Transition Group aimed toward gathering an overall direction in which to move toward developing a viable—and mutually agreeable—model for the implementation of Resolution A.

Unfortunately, as the following charts demonstrate, we were not able to gather a clear direction on either question that was asked pertaining to Resolution A. For example, regarding question #1—“Which model do you believe will best serve the needs of the fellowship now?”—conference participants’ responses ran the gamut from Models One through Four, as well as adding other options that we had not even offered as possibilities such as combinations of various components of the separate models, and even none of the models offered at all. The following graph represents the percent of conference participants who indicated a preference for a specific model.

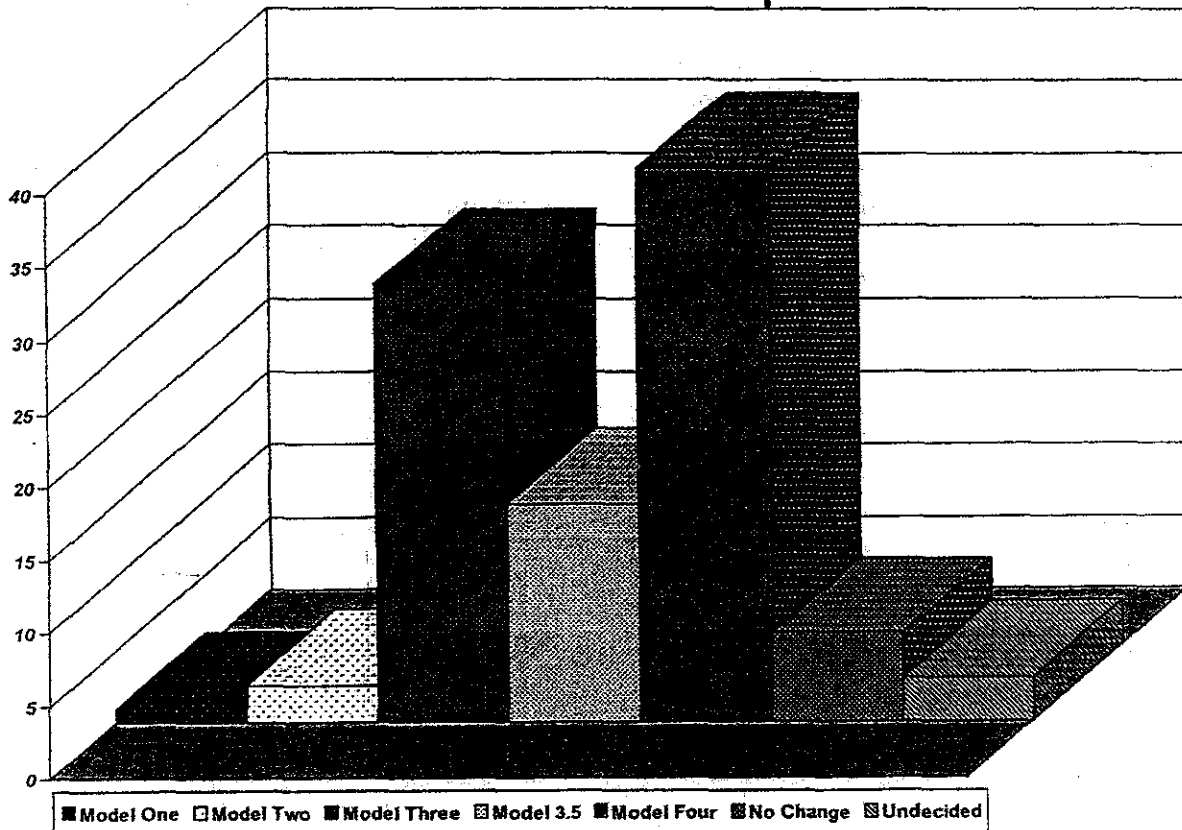
Which model do you believe will best serve the needs of the fellowship now?



Similarly, question #2—“Which model do you believe will best serve the needs of the fellowship in the future?”—showed a highly mixed response as well, though conference participants obviously favored Models Three and Four, or some combination thereof.

Further, while many possibilities were discussed regarding what a “Model 3.5” might look like, there was no general agreement as to what such a combination might include. For some members, the idea seemed to be that the continental autonomy present in Model Four was great, while they hated to see the loss of a World Service Conference. Others seemed OK with the replacement of the WSC with a regular “Sharing Session,” but did not agree with the US control of copyrights. In short, while “Model 3.5” got many positive remarks, there was no general consensus as to what the model actually ought to look like.

Which model do you believe will best serve the needs of the fellowship in the future?



Recommendation for the Future

In the end, the information that was gathered from the small groups at WSC '97 demonstrated only two things clearly to us: First, a majority (about 70%, in fact) of WSC participants want significant change some time in the future. Second, the fellowship needs more time and a great deal more discussion about the various options presented by Resolution A before such sweeping changes to our conference, and to our service structure, can become a reality.

An "evolutionary" process, at the grassroots level, will be necessary for the changes implicit in Resolution A to ever become realizable on a fellowship-wide scale. What this implies is that, while the conference has indeed adopted Resolution A in principle, and has therefore expressed its collective willingness to move in the direction of change, the drive or impetus for that change can only arise from the groups, areas, regions and zonal forums themselves. Without such a fellowship-wide groundswell of activity and support, the changes to representation and participation at the WSC will prove, at best, extremely difficult to enact and sustain.

We therefore recommend that one of the first orders of business for the conference regarding this issue is to determine whether or not Resolution A should be prioritized as an issue discussion topic and whether that discussion should take place in the upcoming conference year or at some later date. Should the conference so prioritize Resolution A, the results of fellowship-wide discussion in groups, areas, regions, and zonal forums about the information in this report could then be forwarded to the World Board.

Whatever process may eventually be decided upon, we can expect that it will take time, fellowship-wide consensus building, and resources. Yet, if maintaining our global unity remains one of world services' priorities, then such a process will be essential to the future effectiveness of the World Service Conference.

