



No. 6 Dec.96/Jan.97

What the Hell

The WSC Administrative Committee in the fall Conference Report made one HELL of a comment. "The administrative committee feels that a single Region alone shouldn't have that ability to move the fellowship into action, for such individualism both dilutes the purpose of the WSC and it's Committees and Boards, as well as minimizes the principles found in our First and Fourth Traditions."

Jeez! First off it's a 50 word sentence. What a wonderful improvement in our need to better communicate by making our material easier to understand. Is this an example of a run-on sentence, or a running off at the mouth? I can't believe that no one caught the size or content of this complaint without comment. I surely would believe that ANYONE in N.A. at that level would have considered the impact of such a statement.

The three signers Mike, Ron, and Jon aren't all of the Administrative body. Do the Chairs and Co-Chairs really all FEEL this way? Were they asked? Who actually "feels" this way? Does the Board of Trustees? How about the RSR's? General members?

Seems that I can take this very seriously, or try and understand. Background check shows in a report to the Policy Committee, Admin Committee suggested that no action be taken on Regional motions pertaining to the Conference. No way you say. Check for yourself. I also believe I am aware of what they meant to say.

Why is it that we operate under new practices before they are approved? There is just undertones of what the Transition Group is going to propose showing up so far. But telling Regions this opinion in this way with no explanation is weird. When 1500-2000 meetings agree on a collected conscience of thousands of addicts they should be listened to and have access to our fellowship directly. This statement says they should not!

But back to the "trust me" idea in service. Do we really think we are mature enough to go there or is this just the first in a long line of WHAT THE HELL sorts of statements?

Idea Transmission

By consciously committing ourselves to doing selfless service, we were focused on the ideal of hearing and picking up on what members had to say. Being extremists, we were abnormally interested in this.

One way to grasp what I am trying to get across here is to deliberately track an idea or suggestion that comes in from a member either verbally or in writing and see if it is repeated in that form and eventually results in something being done, just as it was introduced.

Idea transmission from an instance of caring about the resulting common welfare becomes a way to see if we are actually playing fair and doing service selflessly, or if we are covering up an attitude of superiority, pretending to care and request, and then quickly moving to what we wanted to do in the first place.

I read something from world services the other year that has been circling in my mind ever since, it had to do with a perspective from the view point of a world level person who was just being honest. They said it looked to them like they would encounter something new that needed to be acted on right away and being members they had some ideas that applied to the subject. But they were constrained to submit the subject somehow and get permission from group conscience through a convoluted process over a two or three year period to do what they knew should be done in the beginning.

I wish I had been able to help this person directly. It is a real study in what and how things go wrong. I credit him with the fact that to some extent he was probably right about his original impression. Any sensible system would allow such a person to express themselves to the whole from the beginning. Inclusion doesn't leave people out. If someone within the system sees a solution, it should be available to the whole as much as something from someone remote to the situation. We shouldn't require someone to know nothing about the situation to suggest a solution. Their input or suggestion should be included and if useful it should go into the solution or even be the solution.

One of our responsibilities as an N.A. Member is if we see something wrong to bring it to the attention of other members, it is how our program is self-correcting.

-as told to a member by Jimmy K.

Inclusion allows ANYONE to contribute. There is an awake feeling that goes with being in charge. In a large interactive group the leadership has to commit to recognizing and transmitting suggestions to the overall group.

With all due respect to the member who shared this opinion, I can see where such a person might be constitutionally unfit to serve at their level if they really allow themselves to serve without expressing themselves more successfully.

Of course, sometimes it is difficult to be heard and we have all felt some degree of frustration. But it doesn't have to be that way and there is a way to make the attitude of inclusion a day to day fact in NA service work. By building language into our structure and introducing ideas along the lines we have been discussing, things tend to go into the open direction. Without such guidance, things will tend to drift into the ordinary, everyday approach to things.

It is important to remember that we live in an abnormal state called recovery. In the everyday approach to things, we would be loaded and dead. Or perhaps we would be jailed or institutionalized. Or on the street, looking for our next deal...

New Attitudes...

We shall attempt to print all articles promoting a change in our intolerance and indifference towards spiritual principles. We seek any and all ideas for this publication to become a venue for change. All materials shall be printed in a spirit of anonymity.

We encourage the use of humor and lampoon to stimulate thought and levity. Our hope is to find ways to transgress the perceived separation that exists amongst members of our society.

My Program Works for Me

When I first got clean, I was taught to always get to the meeting early, sit in the front row, and look in the speaker's eyes. I did that for over a year.

One day, I had car trouble on the way to a very big, popular meeting and wound up half an hour late. All the seats up front were taken, and I had to sit in the back. As the meeting progressed, I started looking around. The guy next to me had sixteen years clean, a



woman in the back row had nineteen years clean. Lots of others had double digits, and a few of them were cross talking--seemed like they were having a real good time.

For me, recovery takes many forms. When I need to hear the speaker talking about steps and spiritual principles, I sit up front among the thumpers. When I'm just lonely and craving fellowship, I find a spot way in the back of the room with the gunslingers. If I am looking for recovery, I can find it in a bar or shooting gallery. If I am looking for the disease, it will appear as well--no matter where I am or who I sit with.

In NA we do not stamp out cookie cutter recovery. This is not a cult. Every member is free to run their program exactly as they see fit, and if it works for them, beautiful! In order to stay clean there is only one must: Don't use no drugs. If I want to grow spiritually, I'll work the steps and be of service to others. If not, I'll pay the price myself. I can do that today. One or the other--I have that choice.

I'm glad I sat in the front and showed up at meetings early my first year, because it taught me what I needed to learn--to take direction. But as my recovery evolves, truth changes. What was true for me 7 years ago is not the truth today, and tomorrow may bring new revelations and new truths. What must never change is my commitment to remain teachable, flexible, and open-minded. If I continue to seek recovery and not disease, maintain my conscious contact, God will lead me down the correct path.

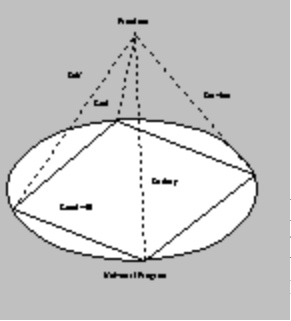
Unity in Recovery

The NA program is filled with people that spent most of their lives in the isolation of addiction. Here they learn that they are not alone and that makes a tremendous difference. The Home Group offers a safe haven to gather the tools necessary for recovery.

As we grow in the program we find that finally we have something to give back. We make coffee, chair meetings, and give out our phone numbers. We share and gain experience, strength, and hope.

This is how the program works, but in order to keep recovery alive and vital, you have to give out to others. Sadly we are addicts and we will our own programs. Social acceptability makes our program grow stagnant. The program is not made up of a select few or micro cliques. Recovery is a process that depends on our unity.

Now I know that we're not perfect, it explains "principles before personalities", but remember how well you were received as a newcomer. People listened and welcomed you. You got meeting lists and phone numbers. The program was a vast resource for you.



Many tried 90 and 90's and started to see that recovery stretched beyond the horizons. Then we discover conventions and see that recovery fills the universe, but invariably we get comfortable. We narrow our field down to a city or area.

Complacency of this kind may not push you to use, but what about the newcomer at a meeting that needs support. What about the faithful addicts that are out there in the farther reaches of the "NA Universe". When we extend ourselves to these people and places something spiritual takes place, it's called unity. We become one. We grow stronger and the addict sitting thinking about using may just hear something to keep them coming back. Who knows, that addict may even be you.

This Newsletter is being provided to any and all interested members of N.A. at COST please feel free to copy and give out as many of these as you like. We will be printing bi-monthly. Our cost is \$0.64 (includes postage) each so 1 yr, subscription would be \$3.84 (.64x6) Please send articles and newsletter money to:

New Attitudes
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P.S. We also deal in the barter system if you would like to send supplies instead of \$, we need stamps, paper (#20 8 x 11), ink cartridges for Lexmark WinWriter 150C.

The Greatest Gift

Whether we know, acknowledge or are even vaguely aware of it, each of us has a very special, extremely important gift. It is the ability to make other people feel good. We can't always do it and we can't always get other people to do it for us, but if we look for the opportunity, there are many times when we can say that little word of encouragement, that expression of gratitude, that little sign of humility or caring and see an immediate change for the better in someone we know and care about. We get to watch, discuss and

study ourselves in recovery and one of the funny things I have noticed about me is that if I feel insecure, I try to help others feel more secure and wind up feeling that way myself. If I am down, I try to make other people cheer up and find myself getting cheerful. I have noticed the mystery of giving what I want and finding out that the giving opens the door to receiving. I knew it was all done with mirrors!

Ebb and Flow

In the beginning of NA getting started in a city, town or neighborhood, there are a few clean addicts who practice the NA way of life sufficiently to attract other addicts and introduce them to our way of life.

The new addicts learn, and through practice, they too stay clean and attract other addicts. At some point, as the program grows, the original ideas get so mixed up with the ideas of a dominant number of people who got part of the message or maybe only a slice, that what gets repeated and acted on is slightly different from what they were told on the beginning. So that Fellowship goes through a period of being - not so attractive. If uncorrected, severe group disorders can set in. When this happens, it is hard to see that it is a function of our success.

The numbers of members and meetings can actually fall off for a while and sooner or later, the members who remain will be back to basics and working steps. The program will again dominate people's thinking and actions and the message will become more attractive.

Sometimes when you hear an old timer insistent about how we do this on a daily basis, they may be recalling great pain from personal experience when a member got fancy and began to try to make their program into something it was never intended to be. We are not trying to take over the world through NA. If we are able to stay clean, grow spiritually and help a few other addicts, that is all we need. If we have personal interests in the direction of taking over the world, we are free to do that in our personal or social lives. But the program is the program. It is clean, happy and free. It doesn't reside in any one place at any certain time. It does not always show up on schedule. It can't be bottled, bought, promised or sold. It is a wondrous and ever-available process called recovery. It works because it works. When it doesn't, someone has forgotten or not yet learned some vital piece and through prayer and meditation, it will come to us what to do and when to do it.

If we get too far from surrender, prayer and meditation, we stop getting the relief, the ideas and the energy. We begin to feel that we have at last reached the edge of the



recovery continent and that to go any further, we risk death at sea. When we regain our senses - or get back to basics - we realize there is plenty of dry land to move around on.

The program so far as any of us knows goes on forever. We just have to practice it and be awake to the miracles happening all around us. When we are, we too can keep it simple and work the steps. And the ebb is over for a time and the flow begins again and we are swept away into the hope and joy that comes from a new way of life. The newness is the result of our desire, our caring for one another and our spiritual condition. Problems are not so much someone's fault as someone's disability. We can usually find ways to make it better if that is what we are looking for...

Inclusiveness

To offset divisiveness within our service workers and promote anonymous service, inclusion became a regular process to us. It involved the routine of examining and absorbing persons of different background and experience into a working whole.

We would go to the people and solicit their opinion on issues until they realized that we were serious about including them. Often some of the most disgruntled became some of our hardest workers because we were giving them something they had never received before: personal appreciation and recognition.

We were somewhat strict about seeing to it that everyone's idea was considered.

One time I recommended to a new chairperson of the WSC Lit Committee that they draw a list of disruptive ideas and follow up on them. By right of the fact that they were irritating meant that there was some point in what they were saying and by doing the follow up almost certainly meant a steady stream of personal breakthroughs. I don't know if they followed my advice or not, but I know I have ever since. It is a simple extension of the open-mindedness that was so prevalent in NA in those days.

A MATHEMATICAL ANALYZATION OF "TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR NA SERVICE" (Or "Do Percentages That Small Really Exist?")

Of approximately 10,000 words in the "Twelve Concepts for NA Service," the following words appear, in order of frequency:

GROUP(1)--115
BOARD/COMMITTEE--73
RESPONSIBILITY(IES)--52
TRUSTED SERVANT/LEADER--46
MONEY/FUNDS/FINANCIAL RESOURCES--46
AUTHORITY(2)--42
GROUP CONSCIENCE(3)--26
OPEN--9
GOD--8
HUMILITY--5
PRAY--4
LOVING(4)--4
HONEST/LY/Y--4
WILLING/NESS--4
TRUST--3
TRADITIONS--2
STILL SUFFERING ADDICT--2
HIGHER POWER--2
ACCEPTANCE--1
SURRENDER--1
NEWCOMER--1
OPEN-MINDED--1
INCLUSIVE--1
POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES--0
ULTIMATE AUTHORITY--0
FAITH--0
HOPE--0
LOVE--0

The figure of 10,000 was reached by multiplying number of lines by average number of words in each line. There may be a discrepancy, but it would favor the low side (i.e., actually more than 10,000).

(1) On some occasions, a group is identified other than the definition given in the Basic Text in the Fourth Tradition.

(2) Other than "ultimate."

(3) On at least 15 occasions, the term "group conscience" is used instead of committee conscience, area conscience, collective conscience, regional conscience, etc.

(4) "Loving" was used only as a prefix to God, on only half the occasions God was mentioned.

Hi family, this issue marks the end of the first year of *New Attitudes*. It has been an exciting and rewarding experience to put out this newsletter. We are grateful to all of you who have supported us and made the continuance of this paper a reality.

Now on to the money stuff.

Income for this issue:	\$31.64
Expenses:	\$31.39
Balance:	\$00.25

Disease Concept

When we take in food and water, our bodies take sustenance from them and our physical lives result. When we take in anything else, our bodies have a clean up crew to take out the garbage. If we look at the drugs as non-food garbage, and our intake becomes overwhelming, these garbage crews get tired. If they get tired enough, they have trouble getting around to their usual functions. This is how I have come to see the disease concept of Narcotics Anonymous. So far as I know, it is not the official view but I feel like there is so much common sense in it that at some point there will be more people who look at it that way than not.

Perhaps there is a scientist in our midst who will undertake the arduous task of proving or disproving the concept. There may be a better, more accurate model just around the corner that no one has expressed before. I am interested in this subject. Continuing, the liver, enzyme and hormone producing organs make up a system that helps the body function. If these are the parts that become overwhelmed, it should be easy to prove that they wear out. When the liver goes, we go. When the pancreas goes, we go. When they are damaged, you have an addict who had best make it into recovery.

Soaking a cucumber in vinegar, you get a pickle. Once you are a pickle, you can't go back to a cucumber. We addicts cannot go back to using. The parts of us that once had full function but were damaged by our addiction can take no more exceptional strain. These organs and systems can work for a long and happy life, but no more using. We have to learn to live life on life's terms and this includes our bodies.

The Love is Real

When I first started learning about God, I think I lucked out. One of the things I learned was that God is the 'real' stuff of the universe. Everything else is illusion. This is an oriental concept and has to do with the nature of reality. Things that come into existence, have duration, and go out of existence are 'unreal' in the eternal sense. Not that they don't have their place and are not to be taken seriously, etc. They just aren't divinely 'Real.'

Another idea I stumbled across in my teenage years was that the purpose of life is to learn to distinguish between the real and the unreal. In this way we learn to take seriously that which is God or related to God, like what I would call today "knowledge of God's will and the Strength to carry it out". Maybe the program is like this for some of us.

This is an article about the power politics taking place in our service structure. Ever since we have been growing into a worldwide Fellowship, we have been plagued with people in the structure who see it, apparently, as a path to political power. These people use tactics that would be either OK or at least expected in the corporate world or even in government. They are not proper in a spiritual fellowship and should never occur. Where they do, they need to be admitted and corrected. Other members need, I believe, to become able to spot them and raise their voice and their votes in opposition. This is the way to self government for NA. This is correct for regional representatives and persons working in world level positions.

Here are a few stories to illustrate my point. They are given without names but each occurred to people I know and who would probably be willing to come forth and attest to the truth of my statements. One person was involved for a period of time with a world service project and had spent years of weekends, travel, lost time from work, and the loving labor of quality service. What did he do wrong? He asked at a board meeting if the matter shouldn't be taken back to the groups for group conscience? He never received another airplane ticket. He was still elected by the Fellowship through the WSC and the motions providing for his travel expense were still there. He never violated any Traditions, he just asked a question. This has never been corrected. No one, so far as I know, challenged the service boards and committees about this, it was just done.

Another member was groomed for years into world service, enjoying many flights and hotels, many appointments and expectation of more. He asked if something was structurally correct or not. He asked another question about "should we be doing this" or "don't we have to check with the groups first..." No more plane tickets. The time and money invested in this persons training is canceled out, their person feelings are muddled by trying to figure out what they did wrong, etc.

Another member who believes in open processing of literature, no back room deals, the Twelve Traditions, was taken to dinner, pressed for their vote on an important issue and appalled at the lack of principles in the persons he was encountering. Everyone by now knows these sleazy things have been going on but everyone acts like it is business as usual. To the victor belongs the spoils. God doesn't come up much and the stories coming out of the annual conference are stultifying or downright sad. Some of the paper work says a committee was formed to develop ideas on how to respond to an issue which was generally indicated with no details. Then the paper went on to say that four proposals were considered. It even elaborated that two were seen as actually different versions of the first and one was considered infeasible. All this, IN A PAGE AND A HALF OF SMALL PRINT and the proposals developed and discussed were never described, even in vague generalities! I have some college education and this writing made me feel dumb until I realized what it was. In English 101 they called it gobbledygook. Well, how is a

Member of NA supposed to react to something like this? How have power politics been so subtly set in place that no one even uses terms like "balance of power" or "conflict of interest" anymore? How much worse has it got to get for people to rise up and make it better?

Part of the trouble is that only the ones in direct contact with WS have direct experience and personal knowledge of these happenings. When you go to talk to another member about them, or try to share in a meeting, it seems like you're bellyaching or taking someone's inventory. Well, after we have taken our own inventory, it is not illogical to look around for who's doing what and where is the trouble coming from. I propose that we start thinking now about planning a large event to invite in members from all over to discuss these classes of concerns and work out a formal, written report to be sent out both to the entirety of world services: the WSC, the WSB and the WSO along with every region at the time of the event. We could call it a Fellowship Forum Weekend.

BECAUSE the love is real. Sadly, it is like someone in your blood family doing wrong but you find it impossible to hate them too much. The thought of exacting a real revenge doesn't even occur. We've just got to find a way to deal with this stuff without it getting white washed or swept under a metaphorical rug. If we don't, who will? World Services? Hey, are you thinking? I mean who even cares about these things but us? Who knows but us? Who is willing to seek solutions that don't require prison sentences or abrupt dismissals? We need to correct our system! Readers of this article who have had similar experience will surely understand that we couldn't plan around these problems before they occurred. For one member, I TRIED. As a WSC officer and as a member of the WSB for a full five year term, I worked hard to address some issues in advance. I was told that can't possibly happen here. I remember one member with over thirty years at the time coming up and making amends. I said, "Didn't I warn against that in writing? Didn't we talk about that? Where did I go wrong? Did I use the wrong words?" He said, "No, we heard what you were saying. We all talked about it. We just didn't really think that sort of thing could happen here. All I can say is we were wrong and I'm sorry." This esteemed member is no longer with us - he died clean. But in his spirit, let's get back to serving! The love is real. We have to care for one another. We pray, step out on faith and take action to help make it better.

There was some serious trouble when the WSO changed hands in the early eighties. There are still confused and hurt feeling about what happened and who did what. But the thing is that eventually a report was written citing all the instances where members in and around the Office did inappropriate things to preserve the Office and keep control. They believed they had enemies and took actions to protect themselves. The Fellowship had to go on. Once the documents were collected, turned into the Board of Trustees it was pretty hard to deny. The old Office went down and NA went on. Nothing is forever - except the things that are real. God alone is real. Don't put your faith in a person, place or thing. Put it in your own conscious contact with a Power Greater than Yourself and see if that doesn't work best. This NA is not a me against you thing or a us against them: that is corporation talk. We are a program of recovering people who love, understand and care for one another. Don't expect me to be your leader. Lead yourselves. God gave you good

sense and working the Twelve Steps will restore this to you. They say the new life may start when you get clean but it really begins with Step Twelve. When your Spirit wakes up, you'll know what to do and God willing, we will be together, side by side, watching God work another miracle! Because... the love, the love we have for one another, the love is Real.

NEW ATTITUDES
P O BOX 447
VESTABURG MI 48891