

# The A.A. Service Manual

## Twelve Concepts for World Service

*by Bill W.*

**1988-1989  
EDITION**

*reflecting actions of the  
1988 General Service Conference*



**THE A.A.  
SERVICE MANUAL**

combined with

**TWELVE CONCEPTS  
FOR WORLD SERVICE**

*by Bill W.*

**ALCOHOLZCS ANONYMOUS® is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common Problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.**

- **The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.**
- **A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any Causes.**
- **Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.**

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## **A Declaration of Unity**


This we owe to A. A.'s future; to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

## **1 Am Responsible. . .**

When anyone, anywhere, **reaches** out for help. I **want** the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

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Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.  
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New York, N.Y. 10163

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A.A. SERVICE MANUAL**



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**TWELVE STEPS and TWELVE TRADITIONS:**  
 included in Bylaws of the General Service Board

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*This is A.A.'s service manual — an outgrowth of the “Third Legacy Manual” which served the movement so well beginning with Bill W.'s first draft in 1951. All of the basic service principles and procedures outlined in that document have been retained. In the interests of convenience and completeness, the material has been edited and rearranged.*

*The Conference Report and Charter Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving the updating and revision of “The A. A. Service Manual”/“Twelve Concepts for World Services.”*

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# A.A.'s Legacy of Service

by *Bill W.*<sup>1</sup>

Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic Service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our **existence**. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a Society for alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves **can** wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

**Hence**, an A.A. Service is anything whatever that **helps** us to **reach** a fellow sufferer — **ranging** all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone **call** and a cup of **coffee**, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these Services is our Third Legacy of Service.

Services include meeting **places**, hospital **cooperation**, and intergroup **offices**; they mean Pamphlets, books, and good Publicity of **almost** every description. They **call** for **committees**, delegates, trustees, and **conferences**. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money **contributions** from within the Fellowship.

<sup>1</sup>Bill these words in 1951, therefore, his words reflect that time period in their **details**.

## *Vital to A.A.'s Growth*

These Services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our **existence** and growth. Nor **can** we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such Services. We would only be asking for complication and **confusion**.

Concerning any given Service, we therefore pose but one question: “**Is this service** really needed?” If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A.

The most vital, yet least understood, group of Services that A.A. has are those that enable us to **function** as a whole, namely: the General Service Office, A.A. World Services, Inc., the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and **much** of our growth **since** early times are directly traceable to this **cluster** of life-giving activities.

Until 1950, these Overall Services were the sole **function** of a few oldtime **A.A.'s**, several nonalcoholic **friends**, **Doctor Bob**, and me. For all the years of A.A.'s infancy, we Oldtimers had been the self-appointed trustees for Alcoholics Anonymous.

### *Fellowship Ready for Responsibility*

At this time, we realized that A.A. had grown up, that our Fellowship was ready and able to take these responsibilities from us. There was also another urgent reason for Change. **Since** we Oldtimers couldn't live on forever, **newer** trustees would be virtually unknown to the A.A. groups, now spread over the whole earth. Without **direct** linkage to A.A., **future** trustees couldn't possibly **function** alone.

This meant that we had to form a Conference representing our membership **which** could meet yearly with our board of trustees in New York, and thus assume **direct** responsibility for the guardianship of A.A. tradition and the **direction** of our **principal** Service affairs. Otherwise, a virtually unknown board of trustees and our too little understood Service headquarters operations would someday be bound to **face collapse**.

Suppose that future trustees, acting quite on their own, were to make a serious blunder. Suppose that with no linkage to A.A., they tried to act for us in time of great trouble or **crisis**. With no **direct** guidance **from** A.A. as a whole, how could they do this? Collapse of our top Services would then be inevitable. And if, **under** such conditions, our world Services did fall apart, how could they ever be reconstructed?

These, briefly, were the conclusions that led to the formation of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Later, I will outline in more detail the events that have now **become** A.A. history.

The deliberative body known as the Conference is made up of elected area delegates **from** the United States and Canada — now numbering **about** ninety — together with

the trustees, the **directors** of A.A.W.S., **Inc.**, and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members numbering forty or more. The Conference held its **first** annual meeting in 1951. **Since then** it has met annually in April in New York.<sup>2</sup> It has proved itself an immense success — establishing a **record** of advisory **actions** that have served the Fellowship well **during** the intervening years of growth and development.

### ***Highlights of A.A. Service History***

To go back to the beginning: One day in 1937, at Dr. Bob's Akron home, he and I added up the **score** of over two years' work. For the **first** time we saw that wholesale recovery of alcoholics was possible. We then had two small but solid groups in Akron and New York, plus a sprinkling of members elsewhere. How could these few recovered ones tell millions of alcoholics throughout the world the great news? That was the question.

Forthwith, **Doctor** Bob and I met with 18 of the Akron Group at the home of T. Henry Williams, a steadfast nonalcoholic friend. Some of the Akron Group still thought we ought to stick to the word-of-mouth process; but the majority felt that we now needed our own hospitals with paid workers and, above all, a book for other alcoholics that could explain to them our methods and results. This would require considerable money — millions perhaps. (**We** didn't know that millions would have ruined us even more than no money at all.) So the Akron meeting commissioned me to get to New York and raise funds. Arrived home, I found the New York Group in **full** agreement with this idea. Several of us went to work at once.

### ***A.A.'s Early Money Problems***

Through my **brother-in-law**, Dr. L. V. Strong, Jr., my only remaining friend and the confidant of the worst of my drinking time, we made a contact with Willard S. **Richardson**, a friend and longtime associate of the Rockefeller family. Mr. **Richardson** promptly took **fire** and interested a group of his own **friends**. In the **winter** of 1937, a meeting was called at the **office** of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Present were Mr. Richardson and his group, Dr. William D. Silkworth, alcoholics from Akron and New York, **Doctor** Bob and I. After a long **discussion**, we convinced our new friends that we urgently needed money — a lot of it, too.

One of them, Frank Amos, soon made a trip to Akron early in 1938 to investigate the group there. He returned with a very **optimistic** report, of **which** Mr. **Richardson** quickly laid before John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Though **much** impressed, Mr. Rockefeller declined to give any large sum for fear of **professionalizing** A.A. He did, however, donate \$5,000. This was used to keep **Doctor** Bob and me going **during** 1938. We were still a long way from hospitals, missionaries, books, and big money. This looked mighty tough at the time, but it was probably one of the best breaks that A.A. ever had.

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<sup>2</sup>**Except** for 1955 Conference held in St. Louis, Missouri.

In spite of Mr. Rockefeller's views, we renewed our efforts to **persuade** his friends of our crying need for money. At length, they agreed that we did need more money, certainly enough to prepare a textbook on our methods and experience.

In the late spring of 1938, I had drafted what are now the **first** two chapters of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous." Mimeographed copies of these were used as part of the prospectus for our futile fund-raising Operation. At board meetings, then held nearly every **month**, our nonalcoholic friends commiserated on our **lack of success**. **About** half of the \$5,000 Mr. Rockefeller advanced had been used to pay the mortgage on **Doctor** Bob's home. The rest of it, divided **between** us, would, of course, soon be exhausted. The **outlook** was certainly bleak.

### A.A. Its Own Publisher

Then Frank Amos remembered his oldtime friend Eugene Exman, religious editor at Harper's, the book publishers. He sent me to Harper's, and I showed Mr. Exman two chapters of our proposed book. To my delight, Mr. Exman was impressed. He suggested that Harper's might **advance** me \$1,500 in royalties to finish the job. Broke as we were, that \$1,500 looked like a pile of money.

Nevertheless, our enthusiasm for this proposal quickly waned. With the book finished, we would be \$1,500 in debt to Harper's. And if, as we hoped, A.A. then got a lot of Publicity, how could we possibly hire the help to **answer** the inquiries — maybe thousands — that would flood in?

There was another Problem, too, a serious one. If our A.A. book **became** the **basic** text for Alcoholics Anonymous, its ownership would then be in other hands. It was evident that our Society ought to own and publish its own literature. No publisher, however good, ought to own our best **asset**.

So two of us bought a pad of blank stock certificates and wrote on them "Works Publishing, par value \$25." My friend Hank P. and I then offered shares in the new book Company to alcoholics and their friends in New York. They just laughed at us. Who would buy stock, they **said**, in a book not yet written!

Somehow, these timid buyers had to be persuaded, so we went to the *Reader's Digest* and told the managing editor the **story** of our budding Society and its proposed book. He liked the **notion** very **much** and promised that in the spring of 1939 when we thought the book would be ready, the *Reader's Digest* would print a **piece about** A.A. — mentioning the new book, of course.

This was the sales argument we **needed**. With a plug like that, the proposed volume would sell by carloads. How could we miss? The New York alcoholics and their fiends promptly **changed** their minds **about** Works Publishing stock. They began to buy it, mostly on installments.

Ruth Hock, our nonalcoholic secretary, typed away as I **slowly** dictated the chapters of the text for the new book. **Fierce** argument over these drafts and what ought to go into them was a main feature of the New York and Akron Groups' meetings for months on end. I **became much** more of an umpire than I ever was an author. Meanwhile, the alcoholics at Akron and New York and a couple in Cleveland began writing their Stories — 28 in all.

When the book **project** neared completion, we visited the managing editor of the *Reader's Digest* and asked for the promised article. He gave us a blank look, scarcely remembering who we were. Then the blow fell. He told how months before he had put our proposition to his editorial board and how it had been tamed down flat. With profuse apologies, he admitted he'd plumb forgot to let us know anything **about** it. This was a crusher.

Meanwhile, we had optimistically ordered 5,000 copies of the new book, largely on a shoestring. The **printer**, too, had relied on the *Reader's Digest*. Soon there would be 5,000 books in his warehouse, and no customers for them.

The book **finally** appeared in April, 1939. We got the *New York Times* to do a review and Dr. Harry Emerson **Fosdick** supplied us with another really good one, but nothing happened. The book simply didn't sell. We were in debt up to our ears. The Sheriff had appeared at the Newark **office** where we had been working, and the **landlord sold** the Brooklyn house, where Lois and I lived. She and I were dumped into the street and then onto the charity of A.A. friends.

How we got through the **summer** of 1939, I'll never quite know. Hank P. had to get a job. The faithful Ruth accepted shares in the defunct book Company as pay. One A.A. friend supplied us with his **summer camp**; another, with a car.

### **A.A. Makes News**

The **first break came** in September, 1939. Liberty Magazine, then headed by our great friend-to-be Fulton Oursler, **carried** an article, 'Alcoholics and God,' **written** by Morris Markey. There was an instant response. **About** eight hundred letters from alcoholics and their families poured in. Ruth answered every one of them, enclosing a leaflet **about** the new book, 'Alcoholics Anonymous.' Slowly, the book **began** to sell. Then the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* ran a series of **pieces about** Alcoholics Anonymous. At once, the Cleveland groups mushroomed **from a score** into many hundreds of members. More books **sold**. Thus we inched and squeezed our way through that perilous year.

We hadn't heard a thing from Mr. Rockefeller **since** early in 1938. But in 1940, he put in a **dramatic** reappearance. His **friend** Mr. Richardson **came** to a trustees' meeting, smiling broadly. Mr. Rockefeller, he **said**, wanted to give Alcoholics Anonymous a dinner. The invitation list **showed** an imposing collection of notables. We **figured** them to be collectively worth at least a **billion** dollars.

The dinner **came** off early in February at New York's Union League Club. Dr. Harry Emerson **Fosdick** spoke in praise of us, and so did Dr. Foster Kennedy, the eminent neurologist. Then **Doctor** Bob and I briefed the audience on A.A. Some of the Akron and New York alcoholics scattered among the notables at the tables responded to questions. The gathering showed a rising warmth and interest. This was it, we thought; our money **problems** were solved!

Nelson Rockefeller then rose to his feet to speak for his father, who was ill. His father was very glad, he **said**, that those at the dinner had seen the promising **beginning** of the new Society of Alcoholics Anonymous. Seldom, Nelson continued, had

his father shown more interest in anything. But obviously, **since** A.A. was a work of pure goodwill, one man carrying the news to the next, little or no money would be required. At this sally, our spirits fell. When Mr. Rockefeller had finished, the whole **billion** dollars' worth of capitalists got up and walked out, leaving not a nickel behind **them**.

Next day, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. wrote to all those who had attended the dinner and even to those who had not. Again he reiterated his **complete** confidence and high interest. Then, at the very end of his letter, he casually remarked that he was giving Alcoholics Anonymous \$1 ,000!

Only **much** later did we **realize** what Mr. Rockefeller had really done for us. At risk of personal ridicule, he had stood up before **the** whole world to put in a plug for a tiny Society of struggling alcoholics. For these unknowns, he'd gone 'way out on a limb. Wisely sparing of his money, he had given freely of himself. Then and there John D. Rockefeller, Jr. saved us **from** the perils of property management and professionalism. He couldn't have done more.

### ***A.A. Grows to Two Thousand Members***

As a result, **A.A.**'s 1940 membership jumped sharply to **about** two thousand at the year's end. **Doctor** Bob and 1 **each** began to receive \$30 a week out of the dinner **contributions**. This eased us greatly. Lois and **I** went to live in a tiny room at **A.A.**'s number one clubhouse, on West 24th Street in Manhattan.

Best of all, increased book sales had made a national headquarters possible. We moved from Newark, N.J., where the A.A. book had been written, to Vesey Street, just north of the Wall Street **district** of New York. We took a modest two-room **office** right opposite the Church Street Annex Post Office. There the famous Box 658 was ready and waiting to receive the thousands of frantic inquiries that would presently **come** into it. At this point, Ruth (though nonalcoholic) **became A.A.**'s first national secretary, and I tumbled into a sort of headquarters handyman.

Through the whole of 1940, book sales were the sole support of the struggling **office**. Every **cent** of these earnings went to pay for A.A. work done **there**. All requests for help were answered with warm personal letters. When alcoholics or their families showed continued interest, we kept on writing. Aided by such letters and the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," new A.A. groups had begun to take form.

### ***Beginning of Group Services***

More importantly, we had lists of **prospects** in many **cities** and towns in the United States and Canada. We tumbled these lists over to the A.A. traveling businessmen, members of already **established** groups. With these couriers, we corresponded **constantly**, and they started still more groups. For the **further** benefit of our travelers, we put out a group directory.

Then **came** an unexpected activity. Because the newborn groups saw only **a little** of their traveling Sponsors, they tumbled to the New York **office** for help with **their**

innumerable troubles. By mail we relayed the experience of the older Centers on to them. A little later, as we **shall see**, this became a major Service.

Meanwhile, some of the **stockholders** in the book Company, Works Publishing, began to get restive. All the book **profits**, they complained, were going for A.A. work in the **office**. When, if ever, were they going to get their money back? We also saw that the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" should now **become** the property of A.A. as a whole. At the moment, it was owned one-third by the 49 subscribers, one-third by my friend Hank P., and the remainder by me.

As a **first step**, we had the book Company, Works Publishing, audited and legally incorporated. Hank P. and I donated our shares in it to the Alcoholic Foundation (as our board of trustees was then called). This was the stock that we had taken for Services rendered. But the 49 other subscribers had put in real money. They would have to be paid in cash. Where on earth could we get it?

The help we needed turned up in the person of A. **LeRoy Chipman**. Also a **friend** and associate of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., he had recently been made a trustee of the Foundation. He persuaded Mr. Rockefeller, two of his sons, and some of the dinner guests to lend the Foundation \$8,000. This promptly paid off a \$2,500 indebtedness to Charles B. **Towns**,<sup>3</sup> settled some incidental debts, and permitted the reacquisition of the Outstanding stock. Two years later, the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous' had done so well that we were able to pay off this whole Rockefeller loan.

### ***Jack Alexander Looks at A.A.***

**The** spring of 1941 brought us a **ten-strike**. The Saturday Evening Post decided to do a **piece about** Alcoholics Anonymous. It assigned one of its star writers, **Jack Alexander**, to the job. Having just done an **article** on the New Jersey **rackets**, **Jack** approached us somewhat tongue-in-check. But he soon became an A.A. "convert," even though he wasn't an alcoholic. Working early and late, he spent a whole month with us. **Doctor Bob** and I and elders of the early groups at Akron, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Chicago spent **uncounted** hours with him. When he could feel A.A. in the very marrow of his **bones**, he proceeded to write the **piece that rocked** drunks and their families all over the nation. It was the lead **story** in **The Saturday Evening Post** of March 1, 1941.

Came then the deluge. Frantic appeals from alcoholics and their families — six thousand of them — hit the New York Office. At first, we pawed at **random** through **the** mass of **letters**, laughing and crying by turns. How could this heartbreaking mail be answered? It was a cinch that Ruth and I could never do it alone. Form letters wouldn't be enough. Every **single** one must have an understanding personal reply.

Maybe the A.A. groups themselves would help. Though we'd never asked anything of them before, this was surely their business, if it was anybody's. An enormous **Twelfth Step** job had to be done and done quickly.

So we told the groups the **story**, and they responded. The measuring stick for **volun-**

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<sup>3</sup>Owner of Towns Hospital in New York; his loan helped to make the Big Book project possible.

tary **contribution** was at that time set at \$1 .00 per member per year. The trustees of the Foundation agreed to look after these funds, placing them in a special bank account, earmarking them for A.A. **office** work only.

We had started the year 1941 with two thousand members, but we finished with eight thousand. This was the measure of the great **impact** of *The Saturday Evening Post* piece. but this was only the beginning of **uncounted** thousands of pleas for help **from** individuals and **from** growing groups all over the world, **which** have continued to flow into the General Service Office to this day.

This phenomenal expansion brought another Problem, a very important one. The national Spotlight now being on us, we had to begin dealing with the public on a large **scale**. Public ill will could **stunt** our growth, even bring it to a standstill. But **enthusiastic** public confidence could swell our **ranks** to numbers we had only dreamed of before. The **Post** piece had proved this.

Finding the right answers to all our public relations puzzlers has been a long **process**. After **much** trial and error, sometimes punctuated by painful mistakes, the attitudes and practices that would work best for us emerged. The important ones **can** today be seen in our A.A. Traditions. One hundred **percent** anonymity at the public level, no use of the A.A. name for the benefit of other Causes, however worthy, no endorsements or **alliances**, one **single** purpose for Alcoholics Anonymous, no professionalism, public relations by the principle of **attraction** rather than **promotion** — these were some of the **hard-learned** lessons.

### *Service to the Whole of A.A.*

Thus **far** in our Society **story**, we have seen the Foundation, the A.A. book, the development of Pamphlet literature, the answered mass of pleas for help, the satisfied need of groups for counsel on their Problems, the beginning of our **wonderful** relations with the public, all becoming a part of a growing Service to the whole world of A.A. At last our Society really began to **function** as a whole.

But the 1941-1945 period brought still more developments of significance. The Vesey Street **office** was moved to Lexington Avenue, New York City, just opposite Grand Central Terminal. The moment we located there, we were besieged with visitors who, for the **first** time, began to see Alcoholics Anonymous as a **vision** for the whole globe.

**Since** A.A. was growing so fast, G.S.O. had to grow too. More alcoholic staff members were engaged. As they divided the work between them, departments began to be created. Today's **office** has a good many — group, foreign and public relations, A.A. Conference, **office** management, **packing** and mailing, accounting, **stenographic**, and special Services to Loners, prisons, and **hospitals**.<sup>4</sup>

It was chiefly from correspondence and from our mounting public relations activity that the **basic** ideas for our Traditions **came**. In late 1945, a good A.A. friend suggested that all this mass of experience might be codified into a set of general

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<sup>4</sup>Other Services have **been** added **since** 1955.

principles, simply stated principles that could offer tested solutions to all of **A.A.'s problems** of living and working together and of relating our Society to the world outside.

If we had become **sure** enough of where we stood on such matters as **membership**, group autonomy, singleness of purpose, nonendorsement of other enterprises, professionalism, public controversy, and **anonymity** in its several **aspects**, then such a **code** of principles could be written. Such a traditional **code** could not, of course, ever become rule or law. But it could act as a **sure** guide for our trustees, for **headquarters people** and, most especially, for A.A. groups with bad growing pains.

Being at the **center** of things, we of the headquarters would have to do the job. Aided by my helpers there, I set to work. The Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous that resulted were first published in the so-called long form in the Grapevine of May, 1946. Then I wrote some more **pieces** explaining the Traditions in detail. These **came** out in later issues of the Grapevine.

### ***Traditions Took Persuasion***

The **first reception** of the Twelve Traditions was interesting and amusing. The **reaction** was **mixed**, to say the least. **Only** groups in dire trouble took them seriously. From some quarters there was a violent **reaction**, especially **from** groups that had long lists of "protective" rules and regulations. There was **much indifference**. Several of our "intellectual" members **cried** loudly **that the** Traditions **reflected** nothing more than the sum of my own **hopes** and fears for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Therefore I began to travel and talk a lot **about** the new Traditions. People were at **first** politely attentive, though it must be confessed that some did go to sleep **during** my early harangues. But after a while I got letters containing sentiments like this: "Bill, we'd love to have you **come** and speak. Do tell us where you used to hide your bottles and all **about** that big, hot-flash spiritual experience of yours. But for heaven's **sake**, please don't talk any more **about** those blasted Traditions!"

Time presently **changed** all that. Only **five** years later, several thousand A.A. members, meeting at the 1950 Cleveland Convention, declared that **A.A.'s** Twelve Traditions constituted the platform upon **which** our Fellowship could best **function** and hold together in unity for all time to **come**.

### ***Medicine Takes an Interest***

By this time, A.A. had found still more favor in the world of medicine. Two of the great **medical** associations of **America** did an unprecedented thing. In the year 1944, the **Medical Society** of New York invited me to read a **paper** at its **annual** meeting. Following the reading, three of the many physicians present stood up and gave A.A. their highest endorsement. These were Dr. Harry Tiebout, **A.A.'s** first friend in the **psychiatric** Profession, Dr. Kirby Collier, also a psychiatrist **friend** and an early advocate of A.A., and Dr. Foster Kennedy, world-renowned neurologist. The **Medical Society itself** then went still **further**. They permitted us to print my

**paper** and the recommendations of these three **doctors** in **pamphlet** form. In 1949 the American **Psychiatric Association** did exactly the same thing. I read a **paper** at its annual meeting in Montreal. The **paper** was **carried** in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, and we were permitted to reprint it.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1940's, two hospitals met all these urgent needs and afforded shining examples of how medicine and A.A. could cooperate. At St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Doctor Bob, the wonderful Sister Ignatia, and the hospital's staff presided over an alcoholic ward that had ministered to five thousand alcoholics by the time Doctor Bob passed away in 1950. In New York, Knickerbocker Hospital provided a ward **under** the **care** of our **first** friend in medicine, Dr. William Duncan Silkworth, where he was assisted by a redheaded A.A. nurse known as Teddy. It was in these two hospitals and by these pioneering **people** that the best techniques of combined medicine and A. A. were worked out.

Since proper hospitalization was, and still is, one of A.A.'s greatest Problems, the General Service Office has retained this early hospital experience, along with the many subsequent developments and ramifications, to groups all over the world — still another very vital Service.

### ***A Rash of Anonymity Breaks***

About this time a serious threat to our longtime welfare made its appearance. Usually meaning well, members began breaking their **anonymity** all over the **place**. Sometimes they wanted to use the A.A. name to advertise and help other Causes. Others just wanted their names and **pictures** in the **papers**. Being photographed with the governor would really help A.A., they thought. (I'd earlier been guilty of this, too.) But at last we saw the appalling risk to A.A. if all our power-drivers got loose at the public level. Already **scores** of them were doing it.

So our General Service Office got to work. We wrote remonstrances, kind ones, of course, to every **breaker**. We even sent letters to nearly all press and radio outlets, explaining why A.A.'s shouldn't break their **anonymity** before the public. Nor, we added, did A.A. **solicit** money — we paid our own bills.

In a few years the public **anonymity-breakers** were squeezed down to **handful** — thus another valuable G.S.O. Service had gone into **action**.

### ***G.S.O. Services Expand***

To maintain all these ever-lengthening Service lifelines, the **office** had to go on expanding. G.S.O. moved to 44th **Street**.<sup>6</sup>

Our present array of Services may look like big business to some. But when we think of the size and **reach** of A.A. today, that isn't true at all. In 1945, for example, we had one paid worker to every 98 groups; in 1955, one paid worker to every

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<sup>5</sup>Now in the Pamphlet 'Three Talks to **Medical Societies** by Bill W.'

<sup>6</sup>Later, it moved to 305 East 45th Street, then to its present address, 468 Park Avenue **South**.

230 groups.<sup>7</sup> It therefore seems **sure** that we shall never be burdened with a bureaucratic and expensive Service setup.

No description of our world Services would be **complete** without **full acknowledgment** of all that has been contributed by our nonalcoholic trustees. Over the years they have given an incredible amount of time and effort; theirs has been a true labor of love. Some of them, like **Jack** Alexander, Fulton Oursler, Leonard Harrison, and Bernard Smith, have given **much** in their fields of literature, **social** Service, **finance**, and law. Their example is being followed by more **recent** nonalcoholic trustees.

As I pointed out earlier, in the 1940's our headquarters was constantly overhung by one great threat to its **future existence: Doctor** Bob and I and our board of trustees had the entire responsibility for the conduct of **A.A.'s** Services.

In the years **leading** up to 1950 and 1951, *we* began to debate the desirability of some sort of advisory board of **A.A.'s**. Or maybe we needed a Conference of larger numbers, elected by A.A. **itself; people** who would inspect the headquarters yearly, a body to whom the trustees could **become** responsible, a guiding conscience of our whole world effort.

But the objections to this were persistent and nothing happened for several years. Such a venture, it was **said**, would be expensive. Worse still, it might plunge A.A. into disruptive political activity when Conference delegates were elected.

Then **Doctor** Bob fell ill, **mortally** ill. Finally, in 1950, **spurred** on by the relentless **logic** of the Situation, the trustees authorized **Doctor** Bob and me to devise the plan with **which** this booklet deals. It was a plan for a General Service Conference of A.A., a plan by **which** our Society could assume **full** and permanent responsibility for the conduct of its most vital **affairs**.

### ***Birth** of the Conference*

It was one thing to say that we ought to have a General Service Conference, but it was quite another to devise a plan **which** would bring it into **successful existence**. The **cost** of holding one was easily dismissed, but how on earth were we going to **cut** down **destructive** politics, with all its usual struggles for **prestige** and vainglory? How many delegates would be required and from where should they **come**? Arrived at New York, how could they be related to the board of trustees? What would be their **actual** powers and duties?

With these several weighty considerations in mind, and with some misgivings, I commenced work on a **draft** of a plan, **much** assisted by Helen B., an A.A. staff member .

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<sup>7</sup>In 1988, with Services still **further** expanded, one G.S.O. worker serves more than 700 groups. |

Though the Conference might be **later** enlarged to include the whole world, we felt that the first delegates should **come** from the U.S. and Canada only. **Each** state and **province** might be allowed one delegate. Those containing heavy A.A. **populations** could have additional delegates. To give the Conference continuity, delegates could be divided into **panels**. An odd-numbered **panel** (Panel One), elected for two years, would be invited for 1951, the first year. An even-numbered **panel** (Panel Two), elected for two years, would be seated in 1952. Thereafter, one **panel** would be elected and one would be retired yearly. This would **cause** the Conference to rotate, while maintaining some continuity.

But how could we pull the inevitable election pressure down? To accomplish this, it was provided that a delegate must receive a two-thirds vote for election. If a delegate got a majority of this **size**, nobody could kick **much**. But if he or she didn't, and the election was **close**, what then? Well, perhaps the names of the two highest in the rumrning, or the three **officers** of the **committee**, or even **the** whole **committee**, could be put in a hat. One name would be drawn. The winner of this painless lottery would **become** the delegate.

But when these delegates met in Conference, what would they do? We thought they would **want** to have real authority. So, in the Charter drawn for the Conference itself, it was provided that the delegates could issue flat **directions** to the trustees on a two-thirds vote. And even a simple majority vote would constitute a mighty strong Suggestion.

### *Delegates Encouraged to Question*

The first Conference was set for April, 1951. In **came** the delegates. They looked over our **offices, cellar** to garret, got acquainted with the whole staff, shook hands with the trustees. That evening, we gave them a briefing Session, **under** the name of "What's on your mind?" We answered **scores** of questions of all kinds. The delegates began to feel at home and reassured. They inspected our finances with a microscope. After they had listened to reports **from** the board of trustees and from all the Services, there was warm but **cordial** debate on many a question of **policy**. Trustees submitted several of their own serious **problems** for the opinion of the Conference.

So went Session after Session, morning, afternoon, and evening. The delegates handled several tough **puzzles about which** we at G.S.O. were in doubt, sometimes giving advice contrary to our own conclusions. In nearly every instance, we saw that they were right. Then and there they proved, as never before, that **A.A.'s** Tradition Two was correct. The group conscience could safely act as the sole authority and **sure** guide for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Nobody present will ever forget that final Session of the first Conference. We knew that the impossible had happened, that A.A. could never break down in the middle, **that** Alcoholics Anonymous was at last safe from any **storm** the **future** might bring. And, as delegates returned home, they **carried** this **same** conviction with them.

Realizing our need for **funds** and **better** literature circulation, some did **place** a little too **much** emphasis on this necessity; others were a little discouraged, **wondering** why fellow members in their areas did not take fire as they had. They forgot that they themselves had been eyewitnesses to the Conference and that their brother alcoholics had not. But, both here and at home, they made an impression **much** greater than they knew.

In the midst of this exciting turn of **affairs**, the Conference agreed that the Alcoholic Foundation ought to be renamed the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, and this was done. The word “Foundation” stood for charity, paternalism and maybe big money. A.A. would have none of these; from here out we could assume **full responsibility** and pay our expenses ourselves.

As I watched all this grow, I **became** entirely **sure** that Alcoholics Anonymous was at last safe — even from me.

## The Twelve ‘Ikaditions (Long Form)

*Our A.A. experience has taught us that:*

1. **Each** member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. **Hence** our common welfare **comes** first. But individual **welfare** follows **close** afterward.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

3. Our membership ought to include all who **suffer** from alcoholism. **Hence** we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may **call** themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other **affiliation**.

4. With **respect** to its own affairs, **each** A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its **plans** concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional **committee**, or individual should ever take any **action** that might greatly **affect** A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

5. **Each** Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity *having* but *one primary purpose* — that of carrying its message **to the** alcoholic who still suffers.

6. Problems of money, **property**, and authority may easily divert us **from** our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. **Secondary** aids to A.A., such as **clubs** or hospitals which require **much** property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they **can** be freely discarded by the groups. **Hence** such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who **financially** support them. For **clubs**, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other **places** of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A.-and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such **cooperation** ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, **actual** or **implied**. An A.A. group **can** bind itself to no one.

7. The A.A. groups themselves ought to be **fully** supported by the voluntary **contributions** of their own members. We think that **each** group should soon **achieve** this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous, is highly dangerous, whether by groups, **clubs**, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large **gifts from** any Source, or of **contributions** carrying any **obligation** whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with **much** concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate **funds** for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has **often** warned us that nothing **can** so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile **disputes** over property, money, and authority.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever **nonprofessional**. We define **professionalism** as the occupation of counseling alcoholics for fees or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to **perform** those Services for which we might otherwise have to engage nonalcoholics. Such **special** Services may be well **recompensed**. But our usual A.A. **Twelfth** Step work is never to be paid for.

9. **Each** A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating **committee**, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their **central** or intergroup **committee**, which **often** employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in **effect**, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the **custodians** of our A.A. Tradition and **receivers** of voluntary A.A. **contributions** by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our Overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of **service**, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority **from** their titles; they do not govern. Universal **respect** is the key to their usefulness.

10. No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to **implicate** A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues — particularly those of politics, **alcohol** reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they **can** express no views whatever.

11. Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal **anonymity**. We think A.A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and **pictures** as A.A. members ought not to be broadcast, **filmed**, or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of **attraction** rather than **promotion**. We **feel it better** to let our friends recommend us.

12. And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of **anonymity** has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to **place** principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in **thankful contemplation** of **Him** who presides over us all.

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## WHAT IS THE CONFERENCE PLAN?

*The Conference plan is what this manual is all about. It is a method by which A. A. 's collective group conscience can speak forcefully and put its desires for worldwide services into effect. It is the structure that takes the place of government in A.A. It insures that the full voice of A.A. will be heard, whether it represents the great majority or a minority. The Conference plan was established as a guarantee that our movement-wide services would continue to function under all conditions. The plan provides a practical successor to the founders of A.A.*

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### CHAPTER 1

# The General Service Conference Structure

*What it is. How it is built.*

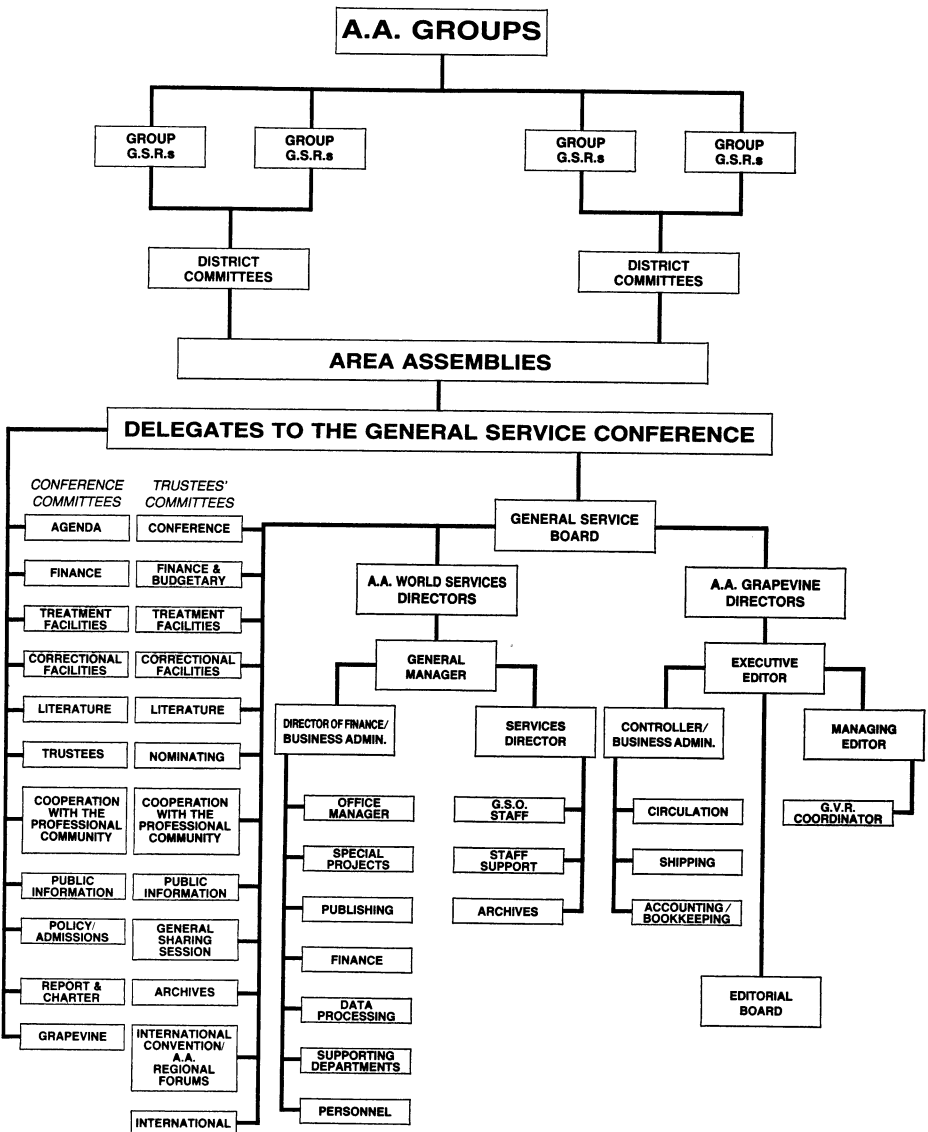
A.A. Traditions say that our program should never be “organized,” should always remain “nonprofessional.” Also that there is no “authority in A.A. except that which expresses itself through the group conscience. Our belief in these principles has worked wonders for our Fellowship in guiding its growth away from “bigness” and “power.”

The same Traditions (Two, Eight, and Nine) then go on to provide for the setting up of Service Centers, with special workers, and Service boards and committees — all **responsible to those they serve.**

The only **authority**, then, is that which is first expressed in the group conscience and which is then communicated — and here is where the idea of the Conference structure begins — by the group to A.A. as a whole.

# Structure of the Fellowship

(United States and Canada)



The Conference plan, or, as it is sometimes known, the Third Legacy plan, was originally set up in 1950 by Bill W. and Doctor Bob. It was confirmed in 1955 in St. Louis on the occasion of the Second International Convention. Bill W. took great pains to explain that the plan was purely suggestive and traditional, not a body of

rules or laws. But it has served the Fellowship well since 1955 and no doubt will continue to do so into the foreseeable future.

So the Conference structure starts with the group conscience — with the group. Let us look at the structural chart and see how this can be transmitted all the way down the line until it affects A.A. worldwide.

***(In this manual, we should remember that we are speaking only of the General Service Conference of the United States and Canada. Similar centers of world services are now set up in other parts of the globe, and there is a biennial World Service Meeting, to which the US. and Canada together send two &legates. There is no attempt to make New York the world capital of A.A.; G.S.O. is regarded as the senior service center only because of its longer experience.)***

The general service structure starts with the group that lets its feelings — approval or disapproval, for or against change — to be known to the G.S.R. (general service representative) whom the group has elected.

G.S.R.'s elect a committee member. G.S.R.'s and area committee members then elect a **delegate** to represent the area in the overall Conference picture. The annual Conference meeting in April in New York (as explained in Chapter VI) is made up of area delegates and G.S.O. people in a ratio of about 2 to 1. Area delegates carry the heavy influence in the Conference, which is felt in two ways: (1) They make up the Conference committees, covering just about all kinds of A.A. activities; (2) all delegates have free access to the Conference platform for the discussion of all actions affecting the movement.

The Conference approves or disapproves the slate for General Service Board trustees, and its members actually propose and select the regional trustee and trustee-at-large nominees.

Trustees meet quarterly and pass along their guidance through their own committees, through A.A. World Services, Inc., and through the Grapevine board. Actions of the trustees are reported to the Fellowship through Quarterly Reports and the **Final Conference Report**, sent to all delegates and area committees.

A.A. World Services Inc., is the corporation that employs G.S.O. personnel, directs G.S.O. services, and is responsible for book and pamphlet publishing. Here are the general manager (who is also chairperson of general services), the A.A. staff members, the department managers, and their employees.

The other corporation reporting to the trustees is the Grapevine board, which in turn employs the Grapevine editorial and business staffs.

So, in keeping with the best tradition of A.A., we find that whatever “authority” exists is first expressed in the group conscience — then passed along through the group representative to the delegate — from Conference to trustees, then to committees and operating boards — to G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs -all acting as custodians of our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and all functioning within the framework of Bill W.'s Twelve Concepts.

Every two years in every state and province, an A.A. group has the opportunity to build its share of the Conference structure. It elects a **general service representative**. This G.S.R. gets together with other G.S.R.'s to elect a committee member

for the district.

Methods of election are handled in some detail in the chapters which follow. The end results are an **area committee** and an **area delegate**. Area delegates gather once a year in New York for a Conference meeting lasting nearly a week. They meet with A.A.'s trustees, other corporate directors, and the G.S.O. and Grapevine staffs, all of whom are also members of the Conference.

The Conference structure is in year-round operation, since the people involved — G.S.R.'s, committee members, delegates — are usually very active in area affairs. The Conference meeting in April then provides a movement-wide forum for the discussion of principles and problems that affect A.A. as a whole.

Every state and province has at least one delegate and one area committee (except the Atlantic Provinces, which are actually four provinces and have two delegates). Some populous states and provinces have more than one.

## WHAT ARE GENERAL SERVICES?

Newcomers soon learn about the importance of Twelfth Step work — service to another alcoholic that helps both giver and receiver to stay sober. They then see such work broadened to include central office or intergroup service, and institutions committee service. Finally, general services. What are they?

In Bill W.'s fine introduction to this manual, he tells how general services grew to fill a need beyond the reach of individual, group, and intergroup. To&y, the term general services is applied to all kinds of activities within the Conference structure, carried on by area committees, delegates, trustees, and G.S.O. staff. Usually the services affect the Fellowship as a whole. Almost always, they are part of A.A.'s distinctive unity, which allows the movement to function so well.

## Meaning of the Conference Charter

The General Service Conference Charter, adopted in 1955, is a body of principles and relationships through which A.A. can function as a whole. It provides, for example, that a majority vote of the Conference shall be considered a **suggestion** to the board of trustees and G.S.O., but that a two-thirds vote shall be **binding** upon the board, regardless of legal considerations.

The Conference itself, however, is unincorporated, and its charter is not a legal instrument in the strictest sense. It is truly an informal agreement between the Fellowship as a whole and its trustees, setting forth the means by which A.A. can give worldwide service.

Such is the practical balance of duties, responsibilities, and powers as they stand today. Though these arrangements can be changed by Conference action, experience indicates that they are thoroughly practical and are likely to **survive** all future strain.

# Original Conference Charter-ES (North American Section)

1. *Purpose:* The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous is the guardian of the World Services and of<sup>1</sup> the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous.

2. *Composition:* The Conference (North American Section) shall be composed of State and Provincial Delegates, the Trustees of the General Service Board, Directors and staff members of the New York Headquarters and such ex-Trustees or foreign Delegates as the Conference may wish to invite?

Other Sections of the Conference may sometimes be created in foreign lands as the need arises out of language or geographical considerations. The North American Section of the General Service Conference will then become the Senior Section, related to the other Sections by ties of mutual consultation and a cross linking of Delegates.

But no Conference Section shall ever be placed in authority over another. All joint action shall be taken only upon two-thirds vote of the combined Sections. Within its boundaries each Conference ought to be autonomous? Only matters seriously affecting **A.A.'s** world-wide needs shall be the subject of joint consideration.

Only matters seriously affecting **A.A.'s** worldwide needs shall be the subject of joint consideration.

3. *Conference Relation to A. A. :* The Conference will act for A.A. in the perpetuation and guidance of its World Services, and it will also be the vehicle by which the A.A. movement can express its views upon all matters of vital A.A. policy and all hazardous deviations from A.A. Tradition. Delegates should be free to vote as their

<sup>1</sup>Updated by the 1969 Conference to include the words: "the Twelve Steps."

<sup>2</sup>Revised by the 1979 Conference to read: "Composition: The Conference (U.S. and Canada) shall be composed of area delegates, the trustees of the General Service Board, directors of A.A. World Services and A.A. Grapevine, and staff members of the Grapevine and General Service Office."

<sup>3</sup>Updated by the 1987 Conference to read:

"Foreign lands in many cases have created autonomous General Service Conferences of their own, which rely on the Steps and Traditions protected by the Conference (U.S. and Canada) and in other ways often turn to the actions of the Conference for guidance.

"Consultation between Conferences is encouraged. And a formal meeting-the World Service Meeting-of delegates from the various Conferences is held once every two years. The U.S./Canada delegates are chosen from the General Service Board.

"In countries where General Service structure exists, the U.S./Canada Conference will delegate sole right to publish our Conference-approved literature to the General Service Board of the structure.

"Only matters seriously affecting **A.A.'s** worldwide needs shall be the subject of joint consideration."

Further clarified by the 1988 Conference to read:

"Other countries have created autonomous General Service Conferences of their own, which rely on the Steps and Traditions that are protected by the United States/Canada Conference. In addition, these other Conferences often turn to the actions of the United States/Canada Conference for guidance.

"Consultation between Conferences is encouraged, and a World Service Meeting of delegates from the various Conferences is held once every two years. The United States/Canada delegates to the World Service Meeting are chosen from the General Service Board.

"In countries where a General Service Structure exists, the United States/Canada Conference will delegate sole right to publish our Conference-approved literature to the General Service Board of that structure."

conscience dictates; they should also be free to decide what questions should be taken to the group level, whether for information, discussion or their own direct instruction.

But no change in the A.A. Tradition itself may be made with less than the written consent of two-thirds of all the A.A. groups.<sup>4</sup>

4. **Conference Relation to A.A. Headquarters:** The Conference will replace **the founders** of Alcoholics Anonymous who **formerly** functioned as **guides and advisors** to The General Service Board and its related Headquarters services. **The** Conference will be expected to afford a reliable cross-section of A.A. opinion for this purpose.

To effectively **further** this same purpose it will be understood, as a matter of tradition, that a two-thirds vote of a Conference quorum shall be considered binding upon the the General Service **Board** and its related corporate services. A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of all the **Conference** members registered?

But no such vote ought to impair the legal rights of the General Service Board and the service corporations to conduct routine business and make ordinary contracts relating thereto.

It will be further understood that, as a matter of tradition, a three quarters vote of all Conference members may bring about a reorganization of the General Service Board and the Headquarters, if or when such reorganization is deemed essential.

Under such a **proceeding**, the Conference may request resignations, may nominate new Trustees and may make all other necessary arrangements regardless of the legal prerogatives of the General Service Board.

5. **State and Provincial Assemblies: Composition of State and** provincial Assemblies are composed of the elected Representatives of all A.A. groups desiring to participate, **in** each of the United States and each of the provinces of Canada.

Each State and province will always be entitled to one Assembly. But States and provinces of large A.A. populations will **be** entitled to additional Assemblies, as **provided by** this Manual of World Service, or **by any future** amendment **thereto**.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Revised by the 1957 Conference as follows: "Bill has suggested that the third article of the Conference Charter, i.e., Conference Relations to A.A. (Second paragraph page 58 of the Third Legacy Manual), be amended to read: "But no **change** in Article 12 of the Charter or in A.A. Tradition or in the Twelve Steps of A.A. may be made with **less** than a written consent of three-quarters of the A.A. groups, as described in the resolution adopted by the 1955 Conference and Convention." If this amendment is made, the seventh paragraph on page 57 of the Third Legacy Manual must also be amended to read: "excepting, however, that any amendment of Article 12 of the Charter or of **A.A.'s Twelve Steps** and Twelve Traditions must have the consent of A.A. groups as provided in Article 3 of the Charter". It was recommended that these amendments be made." Subsequently revised by the 1969 Conference to replace the words "A.A. Tradition" with "The Twelve Traditions of **A. A.**"

<sup>5</sup>Revised by the 1986 Conference as follows: A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of all the Conference members registered. It will be understood, as a matter of tradition, that a two-thirds vote of Conference members voting shall be considered binding upon the General Service Board and its related corporate services, provided the total vote constitutes at least a Conference quorum.

<sup>6</sup>Article 5, paragraph 2 reworded by the 1971 Conference to read: "Generally speaking, each state and province will be entitled to one assembly. However, more than one state or province may be joined to another state or province to form one assembly area. But states and provinces of large A.A. populations and/or whose geography presents communication problems may be entitled to additional assemblies, as provided by the A.A. Service Manual, or **by** any further amendment thereto."

Subsequently, the 1978 Conference made a **further** amendment to Article 5 as follows:

**"Area Assemblies: Composition of:** Assemblies, designated as area assemblies, are composed of the elected general service representatives of all A.A. groups desiring to participate, district committee members, and area committee officers in each of the delegate areas of the United States and Canada."

**6. State and Provincial Assemblies: Purpose of:** State and Provincial Assemblies convene every two years for the election of State and Provincial Committeemen, from which are selected Delegates to the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous held at New York. Such State or Provincial Assemblies are concerned only with the World Service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**7. State and Provincial Assemblies: Method of Electing Committeemen and Delegates:** Whenever practicable, Committeemen are elected by written ballot without personal nomination. And Delegates are selected from among such Committeemen by a two-thirds written ballot or by lot, as provided in the Manual of World Service.

**8. State and Provincial Assemblies: Terms of Office For Group Representatives, Committeemen and Delegates:** Unless otherwise directed by the Conference, these terms of office shall all be concurrent and of two years duration each. In half the States and Provinces, Assembly elections will be held in the even years; the remaining half of the Assemblies will elect in the odd years, thus creating rotating Panels One and Two of the Conference as further described in the Manual of World Service.

**9. The General Service Conference Meetings:** The Conference will meet yearly in the City of New York, unless otherwise agreed upon. Special meetings may be called should there be a grave emergency. The Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services.

**10. The General Service Board: Composition, Jurisdiction, Responsibilities:** The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous shall be an incorporated Trusteeship composed of alcoholics and nonalcoholics who choose their own successors, these choices being subject, however, to the approval of the Conference or a committee thereof. Alcoholic out-of-town Trustees are, however, first nominated by their areas or by their State or Provincial Committees after being cleared by the Conference Nominating Committee.<sup>7</sup>

They are then elected to the General Service Board, the Trustees being obligated by tradition so to do.<sup>8</sup>

The General Service Board is the chief Service Arm of the Conference, and is essentially custodial in its character.

Excepting for decisions upon matters of policy, finance, or A.A. Tradition, liable to seriously affect A.A. as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the A.A. General Headquarters at New York and may name suitable committees and elect directors to its subsidiary corporate service entities in pursuance of this purpose.

The General Service Board is primarily responsible for the financial and policy integrity of its subsidiary services: A.A. Publishing, Inc. and A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

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<sup>7</sup>The 1970 Conference revised the title indicated here as Alcoholic out-of-town Trustee (later appearing as General Service Trustee-at-Large) to be "Regional General Service Trustee." By 1978, this Board title appeared as Trustee-at-Large.

<sup>8</sup>By 1969, the following sentence had been added: "The same procedure is followed for general service trustees in the United States and Canada, except that the Board will specify certain business or professional qualifications." The 1979 Conference substituted the word "will" with "may."

and for such other service corporations as the Conference may desire to form.

The Charter and By-Laws of the General Service Board, or any amendments thereto, should always be subject to the approval of the General Service Conference by a two-thirds vote of all its members.

Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services ought ever take any action liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole, without first consulting the Conference. It is nevertheless understood that the Board shall at all times reserve the right to decide which of its actions or decisions may require the approval of the Conference.

11. ***The General Service Conference: Its General Procedures:*** The Conference will hear the financial and policy reports of the General Service Board and its related Headquarters Services. The Conference will advise with the Trustees, Directors and Staff members of the Headquarters upon all matters presented as affecting A.A. as a whole, engage in debate, appoint necessary committees and pass suitable resolutions for the advice or direction of the General Service Board and the Headquarters.

The Conference may also discuss and recommend appropriate action respecting serious deviations from A.A. Tradition or harmful misuse of the name, "Alcoholics Anonymous."

The Conference may draft any needed by-laws and will name its own officers and committees by any method of its own choosing.

The Conference at the close of each yearly session, will draft a full report of its proceedings to be supplied to all Delegates and Committeemen; also a condensation thereof which will be sent to A.A. Groups throughout the world.

12. ***General Warranties of the Conference:*** In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to serious public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

The principles on which this Charter operates are outlined in "Twelve Concepts" and they should be read?

## A RESOLUTION

Offered by Bill W. and Adopted at the 20th Anniversary Convention of A.A., in 1955.

***(This Resolution Authorizes the General Service Conference to Act for Alcoholics Anonymous and to Become the Successor to Its Co-Founders.)***

<sup>9</sup>The 1981 Conference recommended that this note appear immediately following the Conference Charter.

We, the members of the **Twentieth** Anniversary Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, here assembled at St. Louis in July of the year 1955, declare our belief that our Fellowship has now come of age and is entirely ready to assume **full and permanent** possession of the Three Legacies of our A.A. inheritance — the Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.

We believe that the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, as created in 1951 by our co-founders, Doctor Bob S. and Bill W., and authorized by trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, has now become entirely capable of assuming the guardianship of **A.A.'s** Twelve Traditions and of taking over full guidance and control of the world service of our Society, as provided in the “Third Legacy Manual of World **Service**”<sup>10</sup> recently revised by our surviving co-founder, Bill W.,<sup>11</sup> and of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

We have also heard with approval Bill **W.'s** proposal that **A.A.'s** General Service Conference should now become the permanent successor to the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, inheriting from them all their former duties and special responsibilities, thus avoiding in future time all possible strivings for individual prestige or personal power; and also providing our Society with the means of functioning on a permanent basis.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED:** That the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous should become, as of this date, July 3, 1955, the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the perpetuators of the world services of our Society, the voice of the group conscience of our entire Fellowship, and the sole successors of its co-founders, Doctor Bob and Bill.

**AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD:** That neither the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous nor the **warranties** of Article XII of the Conference Charter shall ever be changed or amended by the General Service Conference except by first asking the consent of the registered A.A. groups of the world. [This would **include** all A.A. groups known to the general service offices around the world.]<sup>12</sup> These groups shall be suitably notified of any proposal for change and shall be allowed no less than six months for consideration thereof. And before any such Conference action can be taken, there must first be received in writing within the time allotted the consent of at least three-quarters of all those registered groups who respond to such proposal.

**WE FURTHER UNDERSTAND:** That, as provided in Article XII of the Conference Charter, the Conference binds itself to the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous by the following means:

That in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the

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<sup>10</sup>**Now** called “The A.A. Service Manual”

“Bill died January 24, 1971

<sup>12</sup>**Resolution:** It was resolved by the 1976 General Service Conference that those instruments requiring consent of three-quarters of the responding groups for change or amendment would include the **Twelve** Steps of A.A., should any such change or amendment ever be proposed.

seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive, or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act in the service of Alcoholics Anonymous and may traditionally direct its world services, it shall never enact laws or regulations binding on A.A. as a whole or upon any A.A. group or member thereof, nor shall it perform any other such acts of government; and that, **like** the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

(This Resolution was adopted by the Convention by acclamation and, in the Conference, by formal resolution by vote.)

St. Louis, Missouri, July 3, 1955

## Current Conference Charter (*United States and Canada*)

1. **Purpose:** **The** General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous is the guardian of world services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous.

2. **Composition:** **The** Conference (U.S. and Canada) shall be composed of area delegates, the trustees of the General Service Board, directors of A.A. World Services and A.A. Grapevine, and staff members of the Grapevine and General Service Office.

Other countries have created autonomous General Service Conferences of their own, which rely on the Steps and Traditions that are protected by the United States/Canada Conference. In addition, these other Conferences often turn to the actions of the United States/Canada Conference for guidance.

Consultation between Conferences is encouraged, and a World Service Meeting of delegates from the various Conferences is held once every two years. The United States/Canada delegates to the World Service Meeting are chosen from the General Service Board.

In countries where a General Service Structure exists, the United States/Canada Conference will delegate sole right to publish our Conference-approved literature to the General Service Board of that structure.

Only matters seriously affecting A.A.'s worldwide needs shall be the subject of joint consideration.

3. **Conference Relation to A.A. :** The Conference will act for A.A. in the perpetuation and guidance of its world services, and it will also be the vehicle by which the A.A. movement can express its view upon all matters of vital A.A. policy and all hazardous deviations from A.A. Tradition. Delegates should be free to vote as their conscience dictates; they should also be free to decide what questions should be taken to the group level, whether for information, discussion, or their own direct instruction.

But no change in Article 12 of the Charter or in the Twelve Traditions of A.A. or in the Twelve Steps of A.A. may be made with less than the written consent of three-quarters of the A.A. groups, as described in the Resolution adopted by the 1955 Conference and Convention.

4. **Conference Relation to the General Service Board and its Corporate Services.** The Conference will replace the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, who formerly functioned as guides and advisers to the General Service Board and its related service corporations. The Conference will be expected to afford a reliable cross section of A.A. opinion for this purpose.

A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of all the Conference members registered.

It will be understood, as a matter of tradition, that a two-thirds vote of Conference members voting shall be considered binding upon the General Service Board and its related corporate services, provided the total vote constitutes at least a Conference quorum.

But no such vote ought to impair the legal rights of the General Service Board and the service corporations to conduct routine business and make ordinary contracts relating thereto.

It will be further understood, regardless of the legal prerogatives of the General Service Board, as a matter of tradition, that a three-quarters vote of all Conference members may bring about a reorganization of the General Service Board and the directors and staff members of its corporate services, if or when such reorganization is deemed essential.

Under such a proceeding, the Conference may request resignations, may nominate new trustees, and may make all other necessary arrangements regardless of the legal prerogatives of the General Service Board.

5. **Area Assemblies, Composition of:** Assemblies, designated as area assemblies, are composed of the elected general service representatives of all A.A. groups desiring to participate, district committee members, and area committee officers in each of the delegate areas of the United States and Canada.

Generally speaking, each delegate area will be entitled to one assembly. But areas of large A.A. populations and/or whose geography presents communication problems will be entitled to additional assemblies, as provided by "The A.A. Service Manual," or by any further amendment thereto.

6. **Area Assemblies, Purpose of:** Area assemblies convene every two years for the election of area committee members, from which are elected delegates to the

General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Such area assemblies are concerned only with the world service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**7. Area Assemblies, Methods of Electing Area Committee Members and Delegates:** Whenever practicable, committee members are elected by written ballot without personal nomination. And delegates are selected from among such committee members by a two-thirds written ballot or by lot, as provided in “The A.A. Service Manual.”

**8. Area Assemblies, Terms of Office for Group General Service Representatives, Area Committee Members and Delegates:** Unless otherwise directed by the Conference, these terms of office shall all be concurrent and of two years’ duration each. In approximately half the areas, assembly elections will be held in the even years; the remaining assemblies will elect in the odd years, thus creating rotating Panels of the Conference, as further described in “The A.A. Service Manual.”

**9. The General Service Conference Meetings:** The Conference will meet yearly in the City of New York, unless otherwise agreed upon. Special meetings may be called should there be a grave emergency. The Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services.

**10. The General Service Board: Composition, Jurisdiction, Responsibilities:** The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous shall be an incorporated trusteeship, composed of alcoholics and nonalcoholics who elect their own successors, these choices being subject, however, to the approval of the Conference **or** a committee thereof. Candidates for alcoholic regional trustee are, however, first selected by the areas in the region. Then, at the General Service conference, voters consisting of delegates from the region involved, plus an equal number of voters — one-half to come from the Conference Committee on Trustees and one-half to come from the trustees’ Nominating Committee — make a selection of a nominee by two-thirds written ballot or by lot. This nominee is then elected to the General Service Board, the trustees being obligated by tradition to do so. For trustees-at-large in the U.S. and Canada, the Board may specify certain business or professional qualifications. The procedure is then as follows. Each Conference area may select one candidate via Third Legacy procedure. Resumes of all candidates will be reviewed for eligibility by the trustees’ Nominating Committee. At the General Service Conference, delegates from each region will caucus prior to the nomination, using Third Legacy procedure, to reduce the number of candidates to one for each region in the U.S. and two for each region in Canada. A maximum of six candidates for trustee-at-large, U.S., and a maximum of four candidates for trustee-at-large, Canada, will be presented to the voting members of the Conference for nomination. Voting members of the Conference will be all delegates from the nominating country (U.S. or Canada) and all members of the trustees’ Nominating Committee. These nominees are then elected to the General Service Board, the trustees being obligated by tradition to do so.

The General Service Board is the chief service arm of the Conference, and is essentially custodial in its character.

Excepting for decisions upon matters of policy, finance, or A.A. Tradition, liable

to seriously affect A.A. as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the A.A. service corporations and may name suitable committees and elect directors to its subsidiary corporate service entities in pursuance of this purpose.

The General Service Board is primarily responsible for the financial and policy integrity of its subsidiary services: A.A. World Services Inc., and A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and for such other service corporations as the Conference may desire to form, but nothing herein shall compromise the Grapevine editor's right to accept or reject material for publication.

The charter and by laws of the General Service Board, or any amendments thereto, should always be subject to the approval of the General Service Conference by a two-thirds vote of all its members.

Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services ought ever take any action liable to greatly affect A.A. as a whole, without first consulting the Conference. It is nevertheless understood that the board shall at all times reserve the right to decide which of its actions or decisions may require the approval of the Conference.

**11. *The General Service Conference, Its General Procedures:*** The Conference will hear the financial and policy reports of the General Service Board and its related corporate services. The Conference will advise with the trustees, directors, and staff members upon all matters presented as affecting A.A. as a whole, engage in debate, appoint necessary committees, and pass suitable resolutions for the advice or direction of the General Service Board and its related services.

The Conference may also discuss and recommend appropriate action respecting serious deviations from A. **A.** tradition or harmful misuse of the name 'Alcoholics Anonymous.'

The Conference may draft any needed bylaws and will name its own officers and committees by any method of its own choosing.

The Conference at the close of each yearly session will draft a full report of its proceedings, to be supplied to all delegates and committee members; also a condensation thereof which will be sent to A.A. groups throughout the world.

**12. *General Warranties of the Conference:*** **In all** its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

# CONFERENCE PANELS

In any one year, about half of the A. A. groups are busy electing G.S.R.'s and half of all area assemblies are electing qualified delegates to the annual Conference meeting, depending on whether the area is an "odd" or "even" panel. Complicated? Not really. . .

The Conference started in 1951 (an odd year) and included 37 delegates.

## DELEGATES ELECTED FOR 'ODD' YEARS

<i>State or Province</i>	<i>Number of Delegates</i>	<i>Area Represented</i>
Alabama	One	Alabama/Northwest Fla.
Arkansas	One	Arkansas
British Columbia/ Yukon Territory	One	British Columbia/ Yukon Territory
California	Two Odd Years (Total 5)	Southern Northern Coastal
Colorado	One	Colorado
Connecticut	One	Connecticut
District of Columbia	One	<b>DC.</b>
Florida	<b>Two</b>	Southern/Bahamas Northern
Hawaii	One	Hawaii
Illinois	Two Odd Years (Total 3)	Chicago
Southern Indiana	One Odd Years (Total 2)	Northern
Iowa	One	Iowa
Louisiana	One	Louisiana
Massachusetts	One Odd Years (Total 2)	Eastern
Michigan	Two Odd Years (Total 3)	Southeastern Central
Minnesota	One Odd Years (Total 2)	Southern
Missouri	<b>Two</b>	Eastern Western
Nevada	One	Nevada
New Jersey	One Odd Years (Total 2)	Northern
New York	Two Odd Years (Total 4)	Southeastern Central
North Carolina	One	North Carolina/Bermuda
Nova Scotia/Nfld./ Labrador	One	Nova Scotia/Nfld./ Labrador
Ohio	Two Odd Years (Total 4)	Central/Southeastern Northeastern
Oklahoma	One	Oklahoma
Ontario	Three Odd Years (Total 4)	Eastern Northeastern Northwestern
Pennsylvania	<b>Two</b>	Eastern Western

<i>State or Province</i>	<i>Number of Delegates</i>	<i>Area Represented</i>
Quebec	Two Odd Years (Total <b>4</b> )	Southeastern Northeastern
Texas	<b>Two</b> Odd Years (Total <b>4</b> )	Northeastern Southeastern
Utah	One	Utah
Virginia	One	Virginia
Washington	One	Washington
West Virginia	One	West Virginia
Wisconsin	One Odd Years (Total <b>2</b> )	Southern Wis.

The following year (an even year) there were 38 delegates added. Since then, there have been additional areas added to states and provinces- total count, 91 — with about half elected in an odd year and half in an even year. You can look at the table below and easily determine whether your area is odd or even.

The two-year cycle applies to committee officers as well, and to committee members and **G.S.R.'s**. They are all elected to start serving in an odd or even year, depending on the area.

# DELEGATES ELECTED FOR 'EVEN' YEARS

<i>State or Province</i>	<i>Number of Delegates</i>	<i>Area Represented</i>
Alaska	One	Alaska
Alberta/N.W.T.	One	Alberta/N.W.T.
Arizona	One	<b>Arizona</b>
California	Three Even Years (Total 5)	Mid-Southern San Diego/Imperial Northern Interior
Delaware	One	Delaware
Georgia	One	Georgia
Idaho	One	Idaho
Illinois	One Even Years (Total 3)	Northern
Indiana	One Even Years (Total 2)	Southern
Kansas	One	Kansas
<b>Kentucky</b>	One	Kentucky
Maine	One	Maine
Manitoba	One	Manitoba
Maryland	One	Maryland
Massachusetts	One Even Years (Total 2)	Western
Michigan	One Even Years (Total 3)	Western
Minnesota	One Even Years (Total 2)	Northern
Mississippi	One	Mississippi
Nebraska	One	Nebraska
New <b>Brunswick/P.E.I.</b>	One	New <b>Brunswick/P.E.I.</b>
New Hampshire	One	New Hampshire
New Jersey	One Even Years (Total 2)	Southern
New Mexico	One	New Mexico
New York	<b>Two</b> Even Years (Total 4)	Western Hudson/Mohawk/Berkshire
North Dakota	One	North Dakota
Ohio	Two Even Years (Total 4)	N.W. Ohio/S.E. <b>Mich.</b> S.W. Ohio/N. Ky.
Ontario	One Even Years (Total 4)	Western
Oregon	One	Oregon
Puerto Rico	One	Puerto Rico
Quebec	Two Even Years (Total 4)	Southwestern
Northwestern		
Rhode Island	One	Rhode Island
Saskatchewan	One	Saskatchewan
South Carolina	One	South Carolina
South Dakota	One	South Dakota
Tennessee	One	Tennessee
Texas	Two Even Years (Total 4)	Southwestern/Northwestern
Vermont	One	Vermont
Wisconsin	One Even Years (Total 2)	N. Wis./Upper Pen.Mich.
Wyoming	One	Wyoming

# Conference Language

## *A Glossary of Terms Frequently Used in General Service Activities*

- ALTERNATE —** A service worker who, at group, district, or area level, assists, supports, and participates in service responsibilities where feasible,, depending on local autonomy and local needs.
- AREA —** A geographical division within a state or province. A Conference delegate comes from an **area**. Normally there is one area to a state or province, except in heavily **A.A.**-populated places, where there may be two, three, or more areas in the state or province.
- AREA COMMITTEE—** A committee made up of district committee members, elected by the general service representatives (**G.S.R.'s**) in each district, and the area committee officers. The area committee is a vital element of the general service structure.
- ASSEMBLY —** A meeting of **G.S.R.'s** and committee members to discuss area **affairs** and biennially to elect a delegate and committee officers.
- CONFERENCE —** The General Service Conference. This can mean either the **structure** involving committee members, **G.S.R.'s**, and delegates in an area, or the **annual meeting** of Conference delegates each April in New York.
- CONFERENCE APPROVED LITERATURE AND FILMS —** Pamphlets, books, and films which the appropriate Conference committees have reviewed and reported favorably to the Conference meeting for its approval, and which have been approved by the Conference.
- DELEGATE —** The man or woman elected at the electoral assembly every other year to represent the area at the annual meeting of the Conference in New York, and to bring back to the area the results of the Conference meeting. (See Chapter V.)

- DISTRICT —** A division within an area to be represented by a committee member.
- DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER—** Or D.C.M. — sometimes called committeeman or committeewoman. He or she is an experienced G.S.R. elected by the other **G.S.R.'s** to represent the groups of their district in area committee meetings — and to coordinate service activities in the district. (See Chapter III.)
- DISTRICT MEETINGS—** The meetings of the district committee member and **G.S.R.'s** of the groups in the district.
- FILMSTRIPS —** Presentations made up of slides-on-film, accompanied by recorded voices, showing work of the General Service Office (G.S.O.), general service activities, and A.A. history; available for area, district, group, and intergroup meetings.
- GENERAL SERVICES —** Originally, the services performed by **A.A.'s** General Service Office (G.S.O.), general service activities, and A.A. history; available for area, group, and intergroup meetings.
- G.S.R. —** The general service representative is an A.A. member so elected by the group to voice the group's opinion in discussions at the area level. **G.S.R.'s**, in turn, vote for the district committee member and for the delegate and other officers at the area level. (See Chapter II.)
- REGION —** A grouping of several states or provinces from which a regional trustee comes to the board of trustees. There are six regions in the United States; two in Canada. (See map, page S109.)
- SHARING SESSION —** A kind of group, district, area, or **conference** meeting where everyone is invited to contribute ideas and comments on A.A. matters. (See page **S90**.)
- THIRD LEGACY —** Recovery and Unity are **A.A.'s** first **two** Legacies. Our Third Legacy is Service, the sum total of all A.A. services, from a Twelfth Step call to **A.A.'s** coast-to-coast and worldwide service activities.
- TRUSTEE —** The usual term for a member of **A.A.'s** General Service Board. Some trustees are **A.A.'s**; some are nonalcoholic. (See Chapter IX.)

## What Is ‘Third Legacy Procedure’?

By “Third Legacy procedure,” we mean a special type of electoral procedure for the election of delegates.<sup>13</sup> It is considered to be unique with A.A. . .

All members of the area committee are eligible for delegate; the chairperson asks whether any are unable to serve, and withdraws those names.

Remaining names are posted on a blackboard. (In rare cases, the meeting, by a majority vote, agrees to accept additional nominations.) All **G.S.R.’s** and committee members of the area who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is posted on the blackboard.

*The first candidate to receive TWO-THIRDS of the total vote is elected.*

After the second ballot (assuming no candidate receives the necessary **two-thirds** on the first ballot), any candidate having less than **one-fifth** of the total vote will be withdrawn *automatically*, except that the **TWO TOP CANDIDATES** must remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.)

A fourth ballot is conducted.

After the fourth ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the chairperson asks for a motion, second, and majority of hands on conducting a fifth and final ballot. (If this motion is defeated, balloting is over and we go to the “hat” immediately. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain. If not, the candidate with the smallest total is dropped. If the motion carries, a fifth and final ballot will be conducted.)

If no election occurs by this time, the chairperson announces the choice will be made by lot (from the hat). At this point, balloting usually involves only the top two or three candidates.

Lots are then drawn by teller, and the first one “out of the hat” becomes the delegate.

Those who have witnessed many A.A. elections in all parts of the United States and Canada are constantly impressed with how well this procedure has worked in bringing well-qualified and willing delegates to the Conference.

At first glance, the method would seem to introduce a strong element of gamble into a matter which should depend on the judgment of the majority. However, as one watches this procedure at work, it appears to be most successful in eliminating the influence of factions or “parties” that seem to thrive on most political scenes. The railroading of a candidate to election is made most difficult, if not impossible, since voters have a wide selection of candidates to choose from. More important, the second-place candidate who may be extremely well qualified but be without **early popular support**, is encouraged to stay in the balloting rather than withdraw.

“Third Legacy procedure” will be described in further detail on pages **S57-58**.

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<sup>13</sup>Also used for regional trustee and trustee-at-large nominations

## Why Do We Need a Conference?

The late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, then chairperson of our board of trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting: “We may not need a General Service Conference to insure our own recovery. We do need it to insure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to insure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth which brought us back to life.

“We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must insure can never invade A.A. We need it to insure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing **overintegration**. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

“We need it to insure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to insure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to insure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.”

## CHAPTER II

# The General Service Representative

*(The G.S. R.)*

The G.S.R. — as the general service representative is known -has the job of linking his or her group with A.A. as a whole. The G.S.R. represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the group's wishes to the committee member and to the delegate, who passes them on to the Conference and to the movement.

For this, **G.S.R.'s** need the confidence of the group. They also need a good ear for listening. We all realize whatever "authority" there is in **A.A.** resides in the group conscience. Because of this, a G.S.R. can determine exactly what a group needs, what a group thinks about a situation, and can pass this information along to where it will be most useful in policymaking.

This is a two-way street, allowing the G.S.R. to bring **back to** the group the problems and remedies that affect A.A. unity, health, and growth. To the extent that a G.S.R. keeps the group informed, then expresses the group conscience, only to that extent can the Conference feel it is acting for A.A. as a whole. This becomes more evident each year — whether a G.S.R. speaks for a group of two or three, or for a **250-member** group.

Experience shows the most successful **G.S.R.'s** are **A.A.'s** who have been active as group officers, intergroup representatives, or public information or institutions committee members. From such work, they have already learned that A.A. offers growth through service, and they become aware of the meaning of our Traditions to the movement's future.

Usually, prospective **G.S.R.'s** have had two or three years of continuous sobriety in A.A. and have time available for district and assembly meetings. Eventually, they may become committee members or area delegates. The group should consider whether a candidate has the capabilities and the time for possible future assignments.

In order that each group may make a wise selection, it is well for it to know what its G.S.R. will actually be doing. In the early days of the Conference, the main and almost **only** function of **G.S.R.'s** seemed to be the election of committee members and delegates. That is still a very important part of the job, but much more has been added:

- Today, **G.S.R.'s** are the mail contacts with the General Service Office in New York and are listed in the A.A. directories as contacts for the individual groups; they receive the G.S.O. bulletin **Box 4-5-9** and keep their groups abreast of A.A. activities all over the world; and they serve as the mail contacts with their district committee members and the area committees.
- In return, **G.S.R.'s** supply their **D.C.M.'s** with up-to-date group information (see p. S44) to be relayed to G.S.O. in time for inclusion in the directories. This information is also essential for G.S.O. mailings.
- They know what material is available from G.S.O.-guidelines, bulletins, filmstrips, tapes, kits, etc.
- G.S.O. keeps them advised of new literature through **Box 4-5-9** and by mailing revised **order forms**. It is the responsibility of **G.S.R.'s** to make sure their groups are informed of the availability of Conference-approved pamphlets and books.
- While they are no Supreme Court on A.A. Traditions, they do learn whatever they can about our vital traditions and customs. They are usually familiar with the books "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" and "A.A. Comes of Age" and the pamphlets "The A.A. Group" and "A.A. Tradition — How It Developed."
- They usually serve on group steering committees and help with financial planning.
- As part of their activities within their own groups, they work with the treasurers to develop practical plans for groups' support of G.S.O., such as the **Regular Contribution Plan** and the **Birthday Plan**. They are equally interested in encouraging the groups to support the area and district committees and the local central offices or intergroups, and they are familiar with the leaflet "Self-Supporting Through Our Own Contributions."
- They participate, of course, in district and area service meetings. They often help with planning, advance registration, and publicity for area get-togethers and conventions. Following these **affairs**, they make reports to their groups for the benefit of those who could not attend. Experience is now indicating that many groups are now financially supporting their general service representatives to attend service functions.

- They know the Group Handbook through and through and help new group secretaries and chairpersons to use it. When a new group is forming nearby, they can be of great help in advising its members about G.S.O. services.

## How Elected?

**G.S.R.'s** serve for two years. Each is elected in the fall of an odd or even year depending on the panel the area is in. (See pages **S33-35** for schedule of panels).

The **G.S.R.'s** term runs concurrently with those of the district committee members and the delegate— that is, they are all elected in the same odd or even year. Customarily, all **G.S.R.'s**, **D.C.M.'s**, and delegates take office January 1, regardless of the date of election.

Since **G.S.R.'s** are elected every *two* years, a special election may be held. To emphasize the need for selecting strong **G.S.R.'s**, the meeting can well include time devoted to the role of **G.S.R.'s** and their work in the district and area. One of the G.S.O. filmstrips may be shown; a seasoned committee member may conduct a question-and-answer session.

An informed group will enjoy a well-planned special meeting. It will emphasize the meaning of “the hand of **A.A.**,” reaching out to bring the group closer to the Fellowship as a whole.

**G.S.R. Alternate:** *In case* a G.S.R. is unable to attend all district and area meetings, an alternate is needed — elected at the same time, by the same procedure. Alternates should be encouraged to assist, participate, and share in responsibilities of the G.S.R., attending district and area meetings where feasible, depending on local needs.

**Election Procedure:** There should be time for nominations from the floor, then for written ballots. A plurality is usually sufficient for election.

**Reminder:** **G.S.R.'s** elected may be in line for election later as district committee members or officers or area delegates. Are they qualified in terms of experience and time available?

**Notification:** As soon as your G.S.R. is elected, notify your area committee and G.S.O. Be sure to include: (1) your group's name and, if possible, service number; (2) the new **G.S.R.'s** name, address, and telephone number; (3) the previous **G.S.R.'s** name (so it may be removed from the mailing lists).

**G.S.R. Kit:** When the above notification is received, the new G.S.R. is sent a kit containing (1) informative memo, (2) form, For Use in Changing Group Information (see opposite page), (3) “The A.A. Service **Manual**”/“**Twelve** Concepts for World Service,” (4) chart, Structure of the Fellowship (see p. **S21**), (5) Regional Map of U.S. and Canada (see p. **S109**), (6) seven useful pamphlets and leaflets, (7) Literature Order Form, and (8) Grapevine Order Form.

## Group Information

Two simplified forms have been developed (sample of each illustrated below) to **facilitate** transmittal of information to G.S.O. : (1) *The New Group Information Record*

is for one-time use only, after a new group is started; (2) the form **For Use in Changing Group Information** is to be filled in appropriately whenever a group changes its name or meeting address, a new G.S.R. is elected, a current G.S.R. has a new address and/or phone number, a new second contact is named, or the current second contact has a new address and/or phone number.

It is important for each group to realize this: If a group is listed at the local intergroup or central office and that office is kept up-to-date on group information, this does **not** mean that **G.S.O.** has been told of the group's existence or given correct current information.

To assure direct and regular communication between the individual group and the General Service Office, each group is assigned a service number. If a group wishes to be listed in the appropriate U.S. or Canadian A.A. directory, this can be indicated in filling out the New Group Information Record.

**NEW GROUP INFORMATION RECORD**  
(PLEASE PRINT AND PRESS HARD)

Date **JAN. 18, 1989**

Location of meeting: Town/City HOMETOWN State/Province OREGON  
IN ACCORDANCE WITH A.A.'S SIXTH TRADITION, IT IS SUGGESTED THAT A GROUP NOT BE NAMED AFTER THE FACILITY IN WHICH IT MEETS.

Group name SERENITY GROUP

Meeting nights/days

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	✓			✓		

Description of meetings OPEN (MONDAY) CLOSED (THURSDAY)  
(Open, closed, beginners. Please also let us know if identified by a language other than English, or if women's, gay, etc.)

Does your group meet in a hospital, treatment center or detox center? Yes  No  If YES, is it open to A.A. members in the community as well as to patients in the center? Yes  No

Group Meeting Place COMMUNITY CENTER, 112 MAIN STREET

**FOR USE IN CHANGING GROUP INFORMATION**      DATE December 2, 1988

TO: Records Department  
P.O. Box 459  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163

NOTE: Please type or print clearly. It is not necessary to complete the entire form. Just give us the group service number, the old information to be deleted, and the new information to be inserted.

GROUP SERVICE NO. D-58-00000(1) DISTRICT NO. 31

	Old Information Only	New Information
1. Group Name	<u>SERENITY GROUP</u>	_____
2. Group's Meeting Address	_____	_____
City	_____	_____
State/Prov., Zip/Postal	_____	_____
3. G.S.R.'S Name	<u>JOHN DOE</u>	<u>LUCY ROE</u>
Street/Address/P.O.Box	<u>51 GORDON STREET</u>	<u>22 PETTITS LANE</u>
City	_____	_____

## CHAPTER III

# The District Committee Member and the District

*The district committee member* is an essential link between the group's G.S.R. and the area's delegate to the General Service Conference. As leader of the *district committee*, made up of all the G.S.R.'s in the district, the D.C.M. is exposed to the group conscience of that district. As a member of the *area committee*, he or she is able to pass on this thinking to the area delegate and the area committee. How capably this is done is the measure of the D.C.M.'s effectiveness.

The district committee member, too, acts as a safety valve for the Fellowship in this period of rapid growth. Were it not for adding committee members to take care of new groups as A.A. grows, the General Service Conference might soon become unwieldy. As the number of A.A. groups shoots up, more districts are needed, rather than more areas. So more committee members can be added, rather than more delegates.

A.A. will have gone far into its future before there are too many district committee members to be heard in assemblies. Co-founder Bill W., when he conceived our general service structure, felt that the answer to growth could always be found in the setting up of more districts (and subdivisions of districts) within an area. The problem is the same today, and so is the answer.

## The Alternate Committee Member

An alternate was found in more than half of the areas that reported, through their delegates, in a recent study of practices in the U.S. and Canada. The alternate is a backup for the regular district committee member. If the latter resigns — or for any reason is unable to serve — the alternate steps in.

Usually, the alternate is elected at the same time as the regular district committee

member, by the same election procedure. (In some areas, no alternates are provided for, but should a regular district committee member be unable to serve, the **G.S.R.'s** in the district should decide on a method of replacement until the next election.) Alternate committee members should be encouraged to assist, participate, and share in the **D.C.M.'s** responsibilities, attending district and area meetings where feasible, depending on local needs.

## The District

Since a committee member is responsible for a *district*, it is important that we take a look at one. A district is a geographical unit containing the right number of groups — *right* in terms of the committee member's ability to keep in frequent touch with them, to learn their problems, and to learn ways to contribute to their growth and well-being.

In the vast majority of areas, a district includes six to 20 groups. In *metropolitan* districts, the number will be **15** to 20. In *suburban* and *rural districts*, the number can be as small as five. When redistricting, approval of the groups within each district involved is essential. The proposed redistricting should be approved by the area assembly.

As the number of groups increases, the committee member's problem is met in either of two ways: (1) The district is split into two districts, each with a committee member to head it; or (2) the district is not split, but more committee members (frequently called "local **committee** members") are elected.

One area reported four to five committee members per district, and each was **responsible** for a clutch of groups. Another area makes the election of a second committee member automatic when there are more than 20 groups in a district. A third area has a fixed policy of providing a committee member for each eight groups. There are many variations, but the goal is the same: to take care of expansion at the committee-member level.

## Who the D.C.M. Is

The district committee member is an A.A. man or woman who usually has served as a G.S.R. and whom the other **G.S.R.'s** wish to make responsible for their district activities. (The G.S.R. spot vacated should then be filled. Experience shows that it is not practical for one to serve as district committee member and G.S.R. at the same time.) An able, experienced G.S.R. makes a good D.C.M. provided he or she has the time and urge to work closely with groups within the district.

Actually, the qualifications for a good committee member are not complicated: (1) a background in A.A. service work that goes with the G.S.R. job (and perhaps with intergroup **affairs**); (2) enough sobriety (say four to five years) to be eligible for election to delegate; (3) the time and energy to serve the district well.

A committee member's responsibilities, as covered in this chapter, may seem quite demanding. But the roster of duties has been put together by Conference delegates, all of whom have filled the committee member's shoes at some time in the past — and well enough to have gained the confidence and approval of their fellow committee members.

## How Do We Elect the D.C.M.?

The term of office is two years. Most areas let this term coincide with those of **G.S.R.'s** and committee officers and area delegates. However, some areas rotate *half* their committee members each year.

Committee members are usually elected in the fall of the year, with the election planned to come **after the** G.S.R. election and **before** that of the Conference (area) delegate. Why? Because the committee member is chosen either from among **G.S.R.'s** currently serving, or from a combination of past and present **G.S.R.'s**. (In nearly all cases, the candidate must first be a committee member before becoming eligible for election as a committee officer or Conference delegate.)

The committee member who is finishing a term sets up the election meeting and notifies the **G.S.R.'s** who have just been elected **and those** who are going out of office. That is the procedure in a great many districts today. Whatever method is used, it should be decided by the area assembly, not by the outgoing committee member. Here are some of the options:

- Alternate **D.C.M.'s** are eligible to run and vote.
- **Only** immediate past and all new **G.S.R.'s** are eligible to run and vote.
- Only newly elected **G.S.R.'s** are eligible to run and vote.
- Only past **G.S.R.'s** are eligible to run — but all **G.S.R.'s**, outgoing and new, should vote.

The last method appears to have some advantages. It gives the A.A. two years of experience as a G.S.R. before assuming the more responsible role. It is desirable to have the same procedure for all districts in an area, and to have it approved by the area assembly.

Election is usually by written ballot with a majority needed to elect. However, a district may choose to follow Third Legacy procedure and call for a two-thirds vote to elect. (See p. S38.)

Generally, and for reasons given earlier, district meetings to elect committee members are held in advance of assemblies and separate from them. But there are cases where travel distances make this impractical and even a hardship. (This usually means that more districts should be set up.)

However, where such a condition exists and cannot be corrected immediately, meetings to elect committee members may be held on the same day as, just before, and at the same place as assembly meetings held to elect officers and a Conference delegate.

When notification of election is received, the new D.C.M. is sent the Conference Kit containing: (1) the **Final Conference Report**, (2) the "A.A. Service Manual,"

(3) the appropriate A.A. **Directory**, (4) A.A. Guidelines, (5) a variety of A.A. pamphlets and flyers, (6) service material, lists and charts, (7) order forms and (8) a Self-support Manual.

Can a committee member be reelected? This question arises occasionally. Of course, the answer is yes — at a regular election where there is every opportunity for presenting all available candidates. Fact is, though, A.A.'s generally feel that rotation keeps the committee more vital and productive.

## What Does the D.C.M. Do?

The duties of a qualified district committee member range from a few to a lot, depending on how far along an area is in general service work. But there is general agreement throughout all areas that duties should be spelled out in detail. Not only does this help clarify what **D.C.M.'s** should or should not be doing — it also has strong morale effect; it makes each of them aware that a D.C.M. is an essential wing of the area committee.

The job is one of two-way communication, as we know. The D.C.M. gets reports from the group level through **G.S.R.'s** and through frequent personal contacts with the groups in the district. He or she helps the Conference delegate cover an area that the delegate could not cover otherwise (on a group-by-group basis). Experience is now indicating that many districts are now financially supporting their district committee members to attend service functions.

In what ways is this best done — or in what ways could a better job be done? Questioned on this point, area delegates were generous with suggestions based on experience in their areas — and these have been put together in the form of a convenient checklist of duties, to be found on the next page.

## What If a D.C.M. Fades Away?

Some areas have never had any problem with committee members who start off with enthusiasm, then **find** job or family or just plain lack of interest take over. One area even reported “100% attendance” all year long. But what happens when the committee member misses two, then three meetings, and hasn't taken the trouble to get the alternate to fill in?

The question: If committee members fail to attend a certain number of meetings, are they **asked** to resign, or are they **automatically** replaced? Or is nothing done about it? Three out of five areas reported “yes,” they replaced such committee members without fuss. And many of those who reported “no” also pointed out that perhaps some plan for replacement would be productive.

The number of “misses” that areas thought critical varied, too. One area allowed only two unexcused absences. Most of the others felt that **three “misses” were the limit.**

Several areas felt that this was a matter for the **G.S.R.'s** to worry about. **G.S.R.'s** chose the committee member. It was up to them to check on performance and to make a replacement if need be.

If there was no alternate, the **G.S.R.'s** of the district committee should agree on the method of replacement to be used, it was suggested.

No hard and **fast** conclusions can be drawn from the area reports on this problem, other than the fact that the problem is understood and is already being dealt with—or soon will be.

## Communication and Specifics

Starting on this page is a very useful checklist of duties and responsibilities. The list could go on and on, but even a casual reading points up the obvious: General service work may suffer **from** weak communication and lack of specifics.

In Twelfth Step work (in which most **A.A.'s** are adept), we have no end of **com-**munication: The sponsor talks to the drunk; speakers talk to and at us; we talk to each other.

There is no problem of specifics, either: pamphlets for everyone, the Big Book, the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions. They are all there for anyone able to listen and to read.

When it comes to general service work — the **Third Legacy** that Bill W. felt so keenly about — the situation is considerably different. We first must get the attention of the alcoholics who are still busy recovering. Then we must get them to focus a bit on the service story, on those newly discovered service responsibilities. We are actually asking them to take time out from the nuts and bolts of recovery to think about another phase of their new lives — this one seemingly very long-range.

So communication starts off being difficult until the **A.A.'s** get service work into perspective — and until they find their way into this manual and into other service literature.

But they **will** learn and they **will** become interested. And you will find that the teaching process is rewarding — perhaps not the thrill of your first Twelfth Step success, but a thrill nonetheless. Ask any delegate or past delegate!

## A HANDY CHECKLIST

### A District Committee Member's Duties

Most area delegates report that a district committee member can be most productive through these measures:

1. Holding regular **meetings of all G.S.R.'s in the district**. About half of the areas reporting hold monthly district meetings. Many hold them quarterly; some, every other month.
2. Assisting the delegate in obtaining **group information in** time to meet the deadline for the appropriate A.A. directory.
3. **Keeping G.S. R.'s informed about Conference activities**. This would include setting up **time-** and **expense-saving** opportunities for the delegate's **Conference** report.
4. Getting **G.S.R.'s** acquainted with "The A.A. Service Manual". ...
5. And with **Box 4-5-9**.

6. Keeping groups informed about **Conference-approved books and pamphlets.**

7. **Holding workshops** on almost any service activity.

In the next rank of importance were these duties — other ways in which a district committee member could become useful — ways that would also prove personally rewarding:

8. Helping make **the Conference report to groups**, in situations where the delegate could not.

9. Getting **G.S.R.'s** acquainted with the **Guidelines** from G.S.O. ...

10. And with "Twelve Concepts for World Service," the **P.I. Workbook**, and any other service material.

11. Holding **sharing sessions** on just about any service subject.

12. And, of course, making a regular practice of **talking to groups** (new and old) on the responsibilities of **general service work.**

That about summed up the **D.C.M.'s basic responsibilities.** In addition, delegates suggested other useful activities. At least one area reported each of the following duties for a district committee member:

- Setting up a **public information subcommittee.**
- Keeping in touch with the **alternate** D.C.M. and with the **delegate** by phone or mail on a regular basis.
- **Sending all district meeting minutes** to alternate and to delegate; also **exchanging** them with other districts.
- **Tying mini-service conferences** in with some of the regular district committee meetings.
- **Inviting delegate to district meetings;** interpreting group conscience for delegate — groups' opinions, not the **D.C.M.'s** own.
- Carrying a specific **message from delegate** to each district meeting and workshop.
- Arranging for **one or more area committee officers** to appear at every district meeting.
- Organizing **district and interdistrict meetings;** arranging for delegate to speak at intergroup meeting.
- Making sure that **minutes** of all meetings go to **committee officers**, as well as to delegate, and that copies of **correspondence go** to **delegate.**
- Making sure that the **alternate junctions** when the regular D.C.M. cannot.
- Bringing **Traditions problems** to the attention of the delegate.
- Stressing with **G.S.R.'s** their **eligibility** for election as district committee member and as Conference delegate; stressing also the **high priority** of A.A. service work.
- Contributing to the **monthly newsletter** in the area.
- Visiting groups, to **fill in holes** where **G.S.R.'s** are weak — and, prior to elections, to **remind groups** of the duties and qualifications of **G.S.R.'s.**
- Helping **G.S.R.'s** to make **interesting reports** to groups, and encouraging them to **bring new A.A. members** to sharing sessions as their guests.

- Attending all possible conferences and conventions to **get ideas**.
- Helping with **regional conferences**. Though these are sponsored by state or provincial committees, host cities can use district committee members' help.
- Encouraging discussion of the **Traditions** at group meetings regularly.

## CHAPTER IV

# The Area Committee

The area committee — perhaps more than any other group of people in A.A. — is responsible for the health of the Conference structure and, by the same token, for growth and harmony in our beloved Fellowship.

The area for which the committee feels responsible may be part of a state or province — or all of it. Thus, the area committee is in a fortunate middle **position**. Through its elected delegate, it learns firsthand what is happening in A.A. world services. Through the members of the committee, it is close to district and local scenes. If **G.S.R.'s** are lax, if there is a lack of harmony in the district, the committee member soon knows it. The D.C.M. can then turn to the whole committee for help in restoring peace or generating more activity among the groups in the district. This middle position is indeed a vital one.

An active committee is aware of all kinds of service problems and is alert to needs that are apparent throughout the Fellowship, such as:

**Solutions for group problems.** Is area experience being shared?

**Active institutional work.** Is the A.A. message getting into hospitals, prisons, jails, and rehab centers?

**Useful public information.** Are news media informed about A.A. in the district? Do they know the A.A. sources for news and feature material? Is there an active public information committee, or is one needed?

**Cooperation with the professional community.** Are professionals in the area aware of A.A. as a resource?

New **Groups and Loners.** Are they being visited and helped?

This is but a sampling of the problems with which an area committee may find itself involved. (See Chapter VIII for full-dress treatment of area activities.) A partial list has been given here to point up the kind of activity and the kind of active **A.A.'s** the committee needs to accomplish its purpose. In other words, there is much more to a committee's work than the election of officers and a delegate to the General Service Conference meeting in New York.

# Who Is on the Committee?

Basically, the area committee is composed of all district committee members — *one member from each district* in the area, whom **G.S.R.’s** have elected to represent their groups. Alternate **D.C.M.’s** are also voting members of the committee in the absence of the D.C.M. There should be enough districts and enough committee members to insure good communication between the committee and the groups. Frequently, ample districts are needed so that no committee member will be faced with undue difficulty in reaching the groups.

Those holding committee offices, which vary but usually consist of chairperson, secretary, and treasurer, are also voting members of the committee — as are the delegate, the alternate delegate, and the chairpersons of special services such as finance, institutions, public information, central office liaison, etc.

In some areas, past delegates serve on the area committee — without a vote; in others, only the outgoing delegates serve on the area committee — without a vote; in others, only the outgoing delegate is an *ex officio* member. The decision on the status of past delegates is left to the group conscience of the area assembly.

## Committee Officers

Leadership must come from the officers. They must have the enthusiasm and **know-how** of the individual committee member, plus the ability to organize and give the committee direction and incentive.

In the preparation of this revised manual, a great number of present and past committee chairpersons were interviewed by letter. They were asked to weigh their successes and failures and to decide, judging by the record, what attributes and experience seemed most helpful to them in fulfilling their jobs. Here are the qualifications for a good chairperson in the opinions of several experienced chairpersons.

## Chairperson Qualifications

**A.A. experience.** Many chairpersons say five years of continuous sobriety; some, three. But all agree that a considerable period of sobriety is desirable, plus experience in group, central office, or institutional affairs. This would normally include a sound understanding and appreciation of the Steps, the Traditions, and the Concepts — and better still, the know-how gained by applying these guides successfully to local problems.

**Leadership.** A chairperson should be able to organize and to lead — yet act like a servant, rather than a dictator. This leadership talent should help him or her instill in others a high interest in Conference service. It should also help to make sure that *some* action is taken on all matters coming before the meeting, leaving no troublesome loose ends. Of course, the ideal chairperson has considerable planning ability. And certainly, he or she will be able to conduct meetings in an orderly manner.

*Ability to communicate.* The ideal candidate is sensitive to the wishes of the local area — but is not too personally sensitive; has an intense desire to see A.A. thrive and prosper — but is tolerant of those who cannot seem to see beyond their group’s horizon; has an interesting and meaningful A.A. history to relate at group meetings, along with the service talk; is skilled in communication and can serve well as the “stay-at-home delegate” — aware of what goes on in the district, in order to keep the delegate informed, and also aware of what goes on in world services, to keep the committee informed.

*Living the example.* One of the greatest services a chairperson can render A.A. — without intending or even realizing it — is simply to live in a way that becomes an example for many members. Through watching such an A.A. in action, they may come to understand that service to others is part of our personal recovery.

## Secretary Qualifications

A good *committee secretary* can add great vitality and drive to an area committee. Even the best chairperson can be greatly handicapped by an inefficient secretary, and can be much more effective with a competent one. Both men and women serve as secretaries (also true of all other offices). Here is what three former secretaries have to say regarding qualifications.

*Sobriety and business experience.* “Reasonable period of sobriety” may mean two years in an area where A.A. is still young, four or five years in an older area. Some service in group or central office or general services is useful. So is some background in general office work. The secretary should be able to type, or have a **stenographer**-typist available.

*Sense of order.* Taking minutes of meetings means sifting through quite a few thousand words to get the kernel, the essence of what has been said. The secretary is also responsible for keeping mailing lists up-to-date and for getting out mailings. He or she may also be responsible for preparing lively bulletins that will bring people to committee meetings and assemblies.

*Time, interest, and energy.* The job demands considerable time and needs to be carried out on schedule. This takes interest, not to mention devotion. The secretary is in a good position to act as liaison between officers and committee members, and can play the role of arbitrator when necessary.

## Treasurer Qualifications

The *area treasurer* should be a responsible person, a man or woman who can keep good records.

*Time in A.A.* Experience would indicate choice of a man or woman who has had a substantial period of sobriety. In addition, the treasurer should be a careful guardian of area funds, with an eye to preventing foolish or extravagant outlays of committee money.

**Accounting experience.** If the treasurer's background includes bookkeeping, so much the better. Otherwise, this officer will need help in setting up a system, or in understanding the present system. If he or she can type, fine! Otherwise, the assistance of a typist will be needed.

**Persuasiveness.** In most cases, the treasurer is responsible for raising the money needed for area support — and the support of G.S.O. This activity calls for firmness and diplomacy. If the committee includes a finance chairperson, then the treasurer is free for record keeping and finance controls.

## Other Officer Qualifications

An area committee may have other officers who are responsible for special activities. A public information chairperson, for example, to head up the area **P.I.** committee is appointed by the area committee chairperson with the approval of the area committee. Some areas have an institutions chairperson, some a convention chairperson. Other areas appoint a finance chairperson whose sole job is keeping contributions coming into area and G.S.O. treasuries. Other assignments handled by special chairpersons or coordinators include: cooperation with the professional community, liaison with central offices or intergroups; preparation of news bulletins; literature; Grapevine, etc.

## Alternate Committee Officers

Some areas find it helpful to select alternates for all committee officers, the position of alternate chairperson being especially encouraged. The alternate committee officers may provide continuity at the area level and may or may not be seated as voting members, depending on local autonomy and area needs.

Where feasible, alternates are encouraged to share and participate in committee activities as fully as possible. It is suggested that the qualifications of alternates closely resemble the qualifications for the positions they might be called upon to assume.

## The Assembly

Any meeting of area **G.S.R.'s** and the area committee is an assembly. The **area, state or provincial assembly** is the mainspring of the Conference structure. It is the democratic voice of the movement expressing itself. Assemblies are the responsibility of the area committee, and they are conducted by its chairperson. An assembly is held at least once every two years to elect a delegate and committee officers.' This election meeting is usually scheduled in the fall of the year, prior to November 1. (The newly elected delegates and officers take office as of January 1.)

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<sup>1</sup>Election procedure is outlined on pages S57-58.

Nonelection assemblies or meetings may be held at any interval the area wishes. In some areas they may be called “workshops” or “general service sessions.” However, most areas call them assemblies and include workshops, etc. But the election meeting is always called an “assembly.” (More about nonelection assemblies in Chapter VIII.)

## SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRPERSON ON ASSEMBLIES

### *Organizing an Assembly*

1. The chairperson consults with his or her committee before setting date, place, and hour for the assembly meeting.
2. Making sure that all groups are notified, the chairperson advises them to send a G.S.R. or to elect a G.S.R. if they have none. Secretary usually handles this notification. Most areas consider assemblies “closed” sessions and for A.A. members only.
3. He or she consults with officers and committee members on the program for the assembly, paying particular attention to any need for additional districts and additional committee members.
4. Much depends on the chairperson’s ability to conduct a smoothly functioning meeting. Those with little experience in chairing business meetings will do a good job if they will bear these simple suggestions in mind:
  - a. Be responsible for keeping the issues *clear*. If a motion is offered, be sure that it is stated clearly and distinctly so that all know what they are voting for or *against*.
  - b. Stick close to Third Legacy procedure for elections and discourage departures from it.
  - c. On simple matters, a majority vote is enough. Even a “sense of the meeting” may take the place of a vote if no vote seems essential. In such a case, the chairperson asks: “Is it the sense of the meeting that. . .?” If there are no “No’s,” it is apparent there is accord.
  - d. Meetings may be fairly informal, but the attention of the entire meeting should be kept on one subject at a time — without the disruptive influence of private conversations.
  - e. An assembly may make its own rules, but the chairperson should make it clear that the members must decide on any desired change in rules *before* a motion is voted on, or *before* an election is conducted. Be sure assembly is aware of suggested procedures in the manual, before changes are made?

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<sup>2</sup>See page S58—“Who is Seated?”

## *A Typical Election Assembly Agenda*

Preparations are complete. **G.S.R.'s** are registered and manuals are available; blackboard and chalk are in the front of the room. What next? What is the order of business? Here is a **typical** agenda:

1. Chairperson opens meetings, asks for a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer.
2. Secretary, delegate, and other officers report on the activities since the last assembly.
3. Chairperson announces procedure for election of committee members and acceptance of members already elected by **G.S.R.'s** in their districts. (See Chapter III for procedure.)
4. Chairperson introduces district map and asks for suggestions regarding further districting. He or she then calls for motions or amendments if redistricting is wanted. Simple majority votes are sufficient.
5. When a committee member has not been elected in advance of the assembly, members from each district caucus to elect one. Chairperson announces a recess for this purpose, and **G.S.R.'s** gather in groups by districts. (See Chapter III.)
6. Chairperson reviews the election procedure (also reviews section entitled "Who Presides? Who Votes?" on page S88) and asks approval of it and the order of election — whether chairperson and other **officers** are to be elected before or after the delegate. Early in the growth of the Conference structure, the delegate was elected last. More recently, the delegate has been chosen first, followed by the alternate delegate, chairperson, secretary, treasurer, etc. The chairperson also asks for permission to select the chairpersons of public information, institutions, and, if needed, other service committees.
7. The delegate is elected by Third Legacy procedure as follows:
  - (a) The eligible committee members' names (suggest full names be used) and districts are written on the blackboard in the front of the room. (Those eligible may be present or past committee members.)
  - (b) The chairperson asks whether anyone is unable to serve and if so, that person's name is removed.
  - (c) Paper and pencils are distributed for written ballots.
  - (d) The secretary calls the roll of voting members. The voting members usually include all **G.S.R.'s** (one for each group) and committee members and officers.
  - (e) Two **nonvoting** members will be selected as tellers, two are collectors of ballots, and another to record and tally votes on the blackboard.
  - (f) Written ballots are cast, collected, and given to tellers to count.
  - (g) Vote will be written on the blackboard alongside the names of candidates.

- (h) The first candidate to receive two-thirds vote is elected.
  - (i) After the second ballot (assuming no candidate receives the necessary **two-thirds** on the first ballot), any candidate having less than one-fifth of the total vote will be withdrawn **automatically?** except that the **two top candidates** must remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.)
  - (j) After the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third of total vote will be withdrawn automatically, except that the two **top candidates** must remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain.)
  - (k) A fourth ballot is conducted.
  - (l) After the fourth ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the chairperson asks for a motion, second, and majority of hands on conducting a fifth and final ballot. (If this motion is defeated, balloting is over and we go the “hat” immediately. In case there are ties for second place; the top candidate and tied second- place candidates remain. If not, the candidate with the smallest total is dropped. If the motion carries, a fifth and final ballot will be conducted.)
  - (m) If no election occurs by this time, the chairperson announces the choice will be made **by** lot (from the hat).
  - (n) Lots are then drawn by teller, and the first one “out of the hat” becomes the delegate.
8. The alternate delegate is elected next, by the same election procedure.
9. Committee officers are then elected separately by the Third Legacy procedure. Officers elected include chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. (See pages **S53-55** — officer qualifications.) Tellers list names of the eligible committee members on the blackboard, and voting continues for each office until one is elected, either by two-thirds or drawn from the hat.
10. The Chairperson then directs the secretary to send a report of the assembly, together with names and addresses of delegates, officers, committee members, and **G.S.R.’s** attending, to the Conference secretary at G.S.O. in New York by December 1. All those elected usually take office January 1.  
(The chairperson then adjourns the meeting).

## Who Is Seated?

**G.S.R.’s** and committee members and area officers make up the assembly. Usually, the G.S.R. attends the assembly nearest his or her group, but may go to any assembly the group wishes, even across a state or provincial line or a national boundary, if

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<sup>3</sup>The 1969 General Service Conference approved the change **from** optional to automatic withdrawal of candidates.

deemed advisable and approved by the assembly of the group's choice.

Uniform procedures throughout the Fellowship are in no way obligatory or even practical in many cases. Procedures suitable in one area may not be in another. It is desirable that every area have its own agreed-upon procedure to expedite the conduct of its business. Every area, operating on the Fourth Tradition, will decide what is best for its own needs and capabilities, and each assembly should be the **final** judge of whom it will seat.

G.S.O. is frequently asked the following questions:

1. Who is eligible to vote at assemblies? Do incoming or outgoing district committee members and **G.S.R.'s** vote? Do both incoming and outgoing **D.C.M.'s** vote? How long should a D.C.M. or G.S.R. hold office before being eligible to vote?

The question is usually answered by referring to this manual, page **S88**, and suggesting that it is important for each area assembly to decide, through its own group conscience, the method it plans to use, so that assembly time is not taken up in the discussion and debate of procedural questions.

2. As each group has only one vote, what about the vote of **D.C.M.'s** or committee officers who also belong to one or another of the groups?

The experience which has been shared with G.S.O. seems to indicate that, even though the delegate, committee officers, and district committee members are each members of a group in the area, they are entitled to vote at the assembly, and that the **G.S.R.'s** vote the conscience of the groups they represent.

3. If the D.C.M. also serves as the G.S.R., should he or she have two votes — one as D.C.M. and one as G.S.R.?

This manual (page S46) suggests that when a G.S.R. is elected a district committee member, the group should then elect another G.S.R.

4. Do the chairpersons of special committees — public information, institutions, Grapevine, literature, etc. — have a vote?

In many areas, chairpersons of such committees are voting members of the assembly. But this is a decision that should be made independently by the assembly in each area.

5. How long must a group have been in existence before its G.S.R. is eligible to vote?

Once again, assemblies can establish their own ground rules on this matter; but usually, if a legitimate A.A. group has submitted the name of a G.S.R. to represent that group at the assembly, the G.S.R. is permitted to vote.

6. Can one G.S.R. represent two groups?

Each group should have its own G.S.R., and the G.S.R. should vote for one group only.

7. When the G.S.R. cannot be present, can he or she vote by proxy?

If a G.S.R. cannot be present, the alternate votes (see page **S88**). A G.S.R. can vote by proxy, but this is not a common practice; it usually applies in the case of institutions groups.

8. Are voting restrictions placed on **G.S.R.'s, D.C.M.'s**, and committee officers who have been absent at the preceding two (or more) assemblies?

It is suggested (page S48) that a committee member be asked to resign if time does not permit him or her to assume the responsibilities. This, too, is a decision to be made by the assemblies themselves, and some do have ground rules relating voting eligibility to attendance at previous assemblies.

## Where Held?

Many areas rotate their assembly sites from city to city. Some are held in the same place — and at the same time — as a state, provincial, or regional convention. This saves the time and cost of travel to a separate meeting, gives all **A.A.'s** who attend the convention a chance to see general services in action. However, the convention program and convention traffic sometimes get in the way of the orderly flow of assembly business, and for this reason the combination site is becoming less popular. Most areas schedule assemblies monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly. Some are weekends, some one-day, etc.

## How the Committee Is Supported

Typical of most financial undertakings in A.A., the cost of supporting an area committee is small in relation to comparable activities in business firms and in many other organizations. Nonetheless, sufficient funds are needed, or the work of the committee will be hampered. Most areas today maintain solvent treasuries and report regularly to their **G.S.R.'s** on the financial picture.

There are, of course, the routine expenses of postage, phone calls, and bulletin printing. The delegate needs money for the trip to the Conference meeting in New York in April. Delegates and committee members incur further travel expense when they report to groups following the Conference meeting. Many active area committees support public information programs, and buy literature for groups in institutions. Each area sends \$400.00 (four hundred dollars) to G.S.O. to help defray the cost of the annual meeting of the Conference. The \$400.00 is sent to G.S.O. no later than March 1 of each year. A reminder is sent in January.

Here are some of the methods areas use to keep their committees solvent and effective:

- They take collections at assembly and district meetings.
- They ask groups for annual or monthly contributions based on about \$1.00 per year per member, usually with a \$5.00 minimum for the group.
- They leave “dime boxes” with groups, pointing out that each member who puts a dime in weekly will have contributed \$5.20 when the year is done.
- They share in the Regular Contribution Plan whereby groups contribute on a monthly or quarterly basis to intergroup (central service office), G.S.O., and area committee.

- Added experience regarding the division for the remaining group funds is contained in the leaflet “Supporting the A.A. Support System.”
- They also receive contributions from area and state convention treasuries.

## CHAPTER V

# The Delegate

Because the delegate goes on a trip, gets to see G.S.O., and helps make worldwide decisions, this has become the golden assignment. Whether this is true or not does not really matter. The picture attracts some very capable A.A.'s and exacts a great deal of work from them.

## The Delegate's Job Is a Demanding One

Insofar as the Conference is concerned, delegates have these primary duties:

1. Attend the Conference meeting in April **prepared**, in order that they can vote intelligently. Every delegate, immediately upon election, is put on the G.S.O. mailing list to receive all Conference materials, requiring several hours of study. When delegates attend the Conference meeting, they bring to it the problems of their areas. They consider and vote on all questions, not as representatives of particular areas, but as members of the Conference whose duty it is to act in the best interests of A.A. as a whole.
2. Following the Conference meeting, the delegates' effectiveness depends on how well they are able to transmit the world picture to their committee members and inspire them to pass on this information and the delegates' own enthusiasm to G.S.R.'s, to groups, and to central offices or intergroups. If the territory is too broad, the delegate will be unable to do the job alone. He or she can, however, give committee members and G.S.R.'s the big picture of A.A. general services and ask them to share the load.

(During the Conference trip, chances are the delegates will have gained a better grasp of G.S.O. services, and will now be able to explain the importance of G.S.O. to the continued health and growth of A.A. They will return home with facts and figures; but more important, they will have a good understanding of a great movement in action.)

So much for going to — and reporting on — the Conference meeting. While that work is vital, it is not *all* of the delegates' job.

3. They must also be prepared to attend all area, state, and provincial service meetings and assemblies. From these meetings, they come to understand the problems in their areas and are better able to make suggestions for the Conference agenda.
4. They belong at every convention and get-together the state or province or region holds. These represent additional opportunities to talk to **A.A.'s** about general services — those **A.A.'s** who might never be reached otherwise. Some regions have an informal get-together put on by past delegates, and one region's meeting is described in Chapter VIII and has been of value to new delegates in that region.
5. They have the job of helping their committees obtain the financial support their areas and G.S.O. need.
6. They take pains to remind **G.S.R.'s** to tell groups and individuals about the A.A. Grapevine and **Conference-approved** books and pamphlets. Many groups are still not in the habit of providing approved A.A. literature at meetings, offering the pamphlets free or at cost.
7. They cooperate with G.S.O. in obtaining information. For instance, delegates help to carry out the membership surveys that provide current data on the range and effectiveness of A.A. And, with the assistance of their **D.C.M.'s** and **G.S.R.'s**, they see that up-to-date information reaches G.S.O. in time to meet the deadline for each issue of the A.A. directory.
8. They remind committee members and **G.S.R.'s** that G.S.O. is an **information** center on A.A. matters. Thousands of groups are in frequent touch with G.S.O. on matters that affect the group, but there are others who do not yet know what services are available.
9. They provide A.A. leadership in solving local problems involving A.A. Traditions (particularly when there is no local central office or intergroup to take the responsibility).
10. They visit groups and districts in their areas whenever possible. Delegates should be sensitive to area needs and reactions. After committee members and **G.S.R.'s** have reported on Conference actions, delegates should learn from committee members how the groups have reacted. Delegates should know this is a two-way street, with information moving in both directions.
11. They assume added responsibility if the area committee chairperson and alternate chairperson are unable to serve. A smoothly running area committee is essential to the work of the delegate. If, for any reason, a committee is not **functioning** as it should, that area's delegate may take on the responsibility of remedying the situation.
12. They work closely with committee officers, sharing experience throughout the year.
13. They keep alternate delegates fully informed, using the alternates' help wherever possible, so an alternate can replace a delegate in an emergency.
14. Late in their second year, they have the job of working with the newly elected delegates — their successors — to pass along a basic knowledge of Conference

procedures and problems. This first- year experience can be shared with their successors at the past delegates' annual get-together in their region.

15. They maintain communication during the year with G.S.O.

## Delegate Expenses

Few things cause more controversy in A.A. than money. A delegate's expenses are no exception.

Seldom does an area committee treasury provide enough funds to meet a delegate's complete travel expenses. Sometimes it provides a generous, allowance for expenses to New York to attend the Conference meeting in April — and then fails to cover the costs of reporting back to the area, certainly equally important to effectiveness as a delegate.

In many cases, the area treasury recognizes the delegate's importance in this two-way communication between the group and the Conference and trustees — and does put up the money needed. Invariably, this pays off in increased activity, interest, and group support.

A delegate's expenses to the Conference meeting are covered in this way. His or her area contributes \$400.00 toward the Conference expenses. The Group Fund of the General Service Board pays the balance, but this does not take care of the many incidental expenses encountered by the delegate. Thus, most areas provide some money to cover these extra expenses.

## What Makes a Good Delegate?

If you are available — or are considering your availability — as a candidate for delegate, ask yourself these questions:

1. How well did you do as a G.S.R.? As a committee member? Did you enjoy the responsibilities? Were you active?
2. Have you discussed the possibility with your family? Will the time be available for the amount of work required?
3. Are you familiar with this service manual? With "A.A. Comes of Age"? And, of course, with the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts?
4. Have you talked with the past delegates to get an idea of the time and effort required and the sort of work you will be called on to do? Past delegates in many regions annually share their experience, strength, and hope at an informal unofficial meeting (described in Chapter VIII) and invite all newly elected delegates and alternates to attend.

There is no standard type of delegate. Like every A.A. member, they come in all shapes and sizes. But there are some characteristics that seem to make for better-qualified delegates, as they themselves agree — often several years after their terms when they can more accurately measure the quality of the job they turned in.

It is generally felt that the delegate should have been active in local and area affairs — as a G.S.R. and committee member. The delegate should have time available — not only for attending the April meeting of the Conference, but for all the efforts needed before and after the Conference. A quick glance at the review of duties earlier in this chapter tells all as far as time is concerned.

Some feel that at least six years of continuous sobriety is essential; some say five. In any event, he or she should have been sober long enough to be considered responsible.

Delegates should be able to make suggestions — and criticisms, too. Since they must chair a meeting from time to time, they should be experienced in this respect. While they do not need to **be final authorities** on all A.A. matters, they should know where to get information. Delegates should know the Traditions and how they apply to local problems.

If a delegate has leadership qualities, so much the better. Then he or she can stimulate action in the area, and team well with the committee chairperson in helping the area to become more service-minded.

A delegate should be open-minded, able to sit down with other delegates to discuss and act on matters affecting A.A. as a whole.

## Delegates Are Servants, Not Senators

Assemblies and delegates alike should remember that delegates are representative of areas in the usual political sense. Delegates do not go to the General Service Conference to **logroll** special benefits for their respective areas. They go primarily to render a service to world A.A., **to** insure that A.A. continues to function as a whole. However, they should bring with them the viewpoints of their own areas on world problems or even such local problems as may affect A.A. as a whole. Delegates are always servants, never senators.

## How Do We Form a New Delegate Area?

If the A.A. population of an area seems to have grown to the point where the current delegate and other trusted servants can no longer provide adequate service and communication, there may be local interest in forming a new area. In such a case, the area committee or committees involved may write to **G.S.O.** and request an application form for an additional delegate.

This four-page form, painstakingly worked out in 1968 by a special meeting of the Agenda/Admissions Committee (now the Committee on Conference Policy/Admissions), requests detailed information about the current service structure, such as: (a) how often assemblies are held and average attendance; (b) whether there is an alternate delegate and what his or her specific duties are; (c) how often district meetings are held and average attendance; (d) the number of active **D.C.M.'s** and whether they assist the delegate in gathering group information and preparing for and reporting on the General Service Conference; (e) the number of active **G.S.R.'s**

in the area and the number in each district; and (f) geographical and A.A. population information about the area and its pattern of growth over the past five years, broken down to yearly figures.

The application form is designed to determine problems regarding geography and A.A. population, as well as whether or not the current area service structure is as well developed as it might be to provide help for the delegate (see the chapter on "The District Committee Member and the District," page S45).

When such a request came up at the **1961** Conference, a memo from Bill W. provided enlightening opinions on the subject. Our co-founder wrote (in part):

"The Conference Committee on Admissions should weight each new application for a new delegate on its own merit, taking into consideration the primary factors of population, geography — and also expense. But this process of adding delegates ought to be gradual, aiming at the remedying of obvious and marked flaws in local communications. We should, our budget allowing, continue to remedy obvious flaws in local communications, and that is all.

"It should be reemphasized that the Conference is not a political body, demanding a completely rigid formula of representation. What we shall need will always be enough delegates at the Conference to afford a reliable cross section of A.A. plus enough more to make sure of good local communications."

## **Delegate Term**

A delegate serves one term of two years. The Conference is on record in its attitude toward delegate rotation. However, the question has arisen: Can a delegate be reelected at some future date? The Conference strongly recommends limiting the term of delegate to one two-year term, with the exception of an alternate delegate who, after filling one year of the delegate's term, may be elected to serve his or her own term.

## **Where Should a Delegate Come From?**

Many areas have adopted their own policy of "rotation" to fend off domination of an area by one or more heavily populated sections. While no delegate represents a city or county in the usual political sense, A.A. often thinks it fairer to move the responsibility around from rural section to city, or from one part of an area to another. However, no especially eligible A.A. should be passed over in the interests of geographical rotation.

## **About the Alternate**

The Conference recommends that all areas have alternate delegates. The alternate serves as a valuable assistant, often traveling with the delegate, or giving reports for him or her. Also, in some areas, the alternate serves on public information, on institutions, or in some other special function of the committee.

An alternate who replaces the delegate at the annual meeting of the General Service Conference will remain on the G.S.O. mailing list as that area's delegate until G.S.O. is informed otherwise by the area committee.

## Reporting Back Home on the Conference

### ‘A Delegate’s Job Is Not All Peaches and Cream’

Not by a long shot, say most delegates. There is much work to be done, and there can be many frustrations. Here four **A.A.’s** tell how they went about improving **com-** munications between groups and area committees and G.S.O. while they were delegates. Each gives highlights of the work in making an interesting— and challenging — report of the Conference to the groups back home.

\* \* \*

“My report to G. S. **R.’s**, groups, and the state convention consisted of a description of what I saw and heard and felt at the Conference meeting in New York. (I also made copies of my report and made them available.)

“The distances between towns in my state are great, and it seemed best to make my reports to intergroup meetings when possible. My report was given at five such meetings and was well received. (In a sixth city, where a special Saturday-night meetings had been called, only the state chairperson and secretary showed up.) I suggest that the *regular* intergroup meeting or an extended regular group meeting be used for reporting the Conference — with an A.A. talk after the report.

“In addition, I frequently reported to members, **G.S.R.’s**, and groups *by mail*. I try to do a bulletin a month, each on one or more subjects. My Conference report gives me all the material I need. No, a delegate’s job is not all peaches and cream — it’s also a God-given privilege.”

### ‘If You Attract — You Can’t Miss’

“Make an announcement a month before you give your report; set up dates with district committee members. Where districts are small, have two or three combined. (Refreshments help.) Ask to be invited — or invite yourself. Get in somehow! It costs groups and G.S.O. money to bring in delegates; groups should see and hear the reports on the Conference.

“Give as much of your time to the small group as to the large one. Don’t pass up the opportunity to share with them all. Let them know about the staff at G.S.O. and the service work that they encourage all over the world.

“Invite groups to attend special area meetings with programs of questions and answers about world services and G.S.O. Include two or more past delegates. Hold meetings often — and in different districts. Remember our key word: attraction. If you attract, you can’t miss.”

## ‘How Not to Win a Popularity Contest’

“As the goodbyes were being said, I already knew what my path should be: not to return home to try to win a popularity contest, but rather to paint the picture the way it was.

On my return, I traveled some 4,000 miles in the first six weeks visiting groups. I chose my words carefully, never telling anyone that we **must** do this or that, merely pointing out what other states were doing.

“We needed a foundation, I pointed out, from which to pursue a healthy growth. Lack of unity might be diverting us from our primary purpose. Personalities might be replacing group conscience.

“Perhaps we were not doing a good job of carrying the message, either. Our state ranked high in number of alcoholics, yet in A.A. population we were one of the slowest-growing. When people in our own state reached out for help, the hand of A.A. was not always there.

“If I was not asked to speak at group meetings, I **asked them** to let me speak. I made a point of never talking too long, but I gave literally hundreds of these talks. I talked of service and unity and G.S.O. and state assembly until it all overflowed our state borders into the Atlantic.

“What were the results? More new groups than in any year in our history. The assembly used ‘The Third Legacy Manual’ to build a foundation for the state. An institutional committee, a public information committee, and a convention committee were formed. The assembly now supplies free Conference-approved literature to institutions. We put out a monthly bulletin that helps cut through the barrier of group isolation. We hold monthly sharing sessions and workshops that help us all. We held our first state convention.

“We have grown — and if I were asked to pick out the one part of our activities that contributed most, it would be improved communications.”

## ‘Taped Talk — Effective — Inexpensive’

“In addition to detailed reporting of the material **and** spirit of the Conference sessions at our state convention, copies of my notes were made available to the area committee members upon their request. Fortunately, we were able to make arrangements for my talk to be taped and made available throughout our area — an inexpensive and effective way of carrying the Conference message in some detail.”

# Personal Views

## How I Got Interested in General Service

(Three past delegates report)

“Often I think back to a very dark day in an alcoholic ward, where, in utter despair and desperation, I asked God to remove only the uncontrollable part of my urge to drink, and to leave the legwork to me. I thought of this as wanting to ‘do my part.’ Later, after my prayers had been answered, I remembered my commitment to do my part — but I was never quite sure what I had meant. Still later, the Third Legacy of Service opened a new door for me and solved the problem of how I could fulfill the most important contract I’ll ever make.”

\* \* \*

“My A.A. experience taught me in varying degrees the meaning of tolerance, patience, love of my fellowman, humility. I began to comprehend that we have a fellowship. My conception of a fellowship is a group or society of human beings concerned with each other. To me, this is A.A. From then on, it was easy to become interested in general services.”

\* \* \*

“Early in my A.A. life, I asked myself how I could express my gratitude. The answer was simple: by dedicating my life to A.A. and its people. I found out that the more I knew about A.A., the more effectively I could carry the message. The more I know about A.A. — from the bottom up and the top down, across its scope worldwide — the more I love it. And the more I love it, the better equipped I am to carry to message. I feel that my two years as delegate did more to prepare me for the part I have played in A.A. than any other activity.”

## The Making of a Delegate

(Excerpts from a delegate’s talk on “the world family of **A.A.**”)

“During my first eight years in A. A., I came to believe (subconsciously, perhaps) that the quality and quantity of A.A. were being determined by my own particular group. I believe I considered it a shield that might protect me from any harm that might come to me from outside, and I still had this attitude when I was chosen as my group’s G.S.R.

After finding out who our delegate was, and filing my name with him, I settled back into the comfort, safety, and security of my own group, only to be aroused some weeks later by a call to meet with four other **G.S.R.’s** to elect a committee member.

When this meeting elected me, I was dumbfounded and scared. I felt I was being forced into a situation that threatened my comfort and complacency — even my security. But instinctively I began to realize that outside my group there was a much larger family, of which my group was a part. I started to read all general service literature available, particularly ‘The Third Legacy Manual.’

“I began to receive phone calls about group problems. I found myself actually being asked for my opinion. More and more, I recognized the need for practicing the Eleventh Step.

“One day I presented myself, with 16 other committee members, to a general assembly. When I was finally selected as the next delegate, never in my life had I been so aware of my inadequacy, my unpreparedness for such responsibility.

“Through prayer, study, and great help from the outgoing delegate, I got ready for the April Conference meeting. Months later, in New York, after the opening dinner, I received a telegram from my group, a message of confidence in me and assurance that they were with me in spirit. I knew then that the link between my group, the assembly, the delegates, and the whole Fellowship would never be broken.”

“It is vitally important for me to remember every moment that the door of A.A. must always be open to all who have not yet arrived. **A.A.’s** worldwide services (of which delegates and committee members and **G.S.R.’s** are vital parts) are the instruments that will keep that door open.”

## Preparing for the Conference

(A delegate offers practical suggestions)

“Although you may have been involved in A.A. service for some time, don’t take your knowledge for granted. Do some reviewing as quickly as possible. Read and reread this manual, ‘A.A. Comes of Age,’ and ‘Twelve Concepts for World Service.’ Get copies of the full Conference Reports for the past two or three years for further study. Seek out some past delegates to share their experience.

“Start a Conference file, because you’ll get lots of letters from the Conference secretary at the General Service Office, containing background information and requests. Read them thoroughly; make notes on what you’re asked to do; do it. You’ll receive questionnaires; expedite replies. G.S.O. may request material from you; expedite this, too. Promptness is necessary so that, by the time the Conference opens, your material will have been compiled for use in a report, a panel discussion, a workshop, a floor discussion, or a committee action.

“Early on, you’ll receive two important communications. One will ask your area treasurer to send in a check for your area’s share of expenses. Be sure this deadline is met. Another will seek information on your arrival time, transportation costs, and housing details. Be sure this is supplied at once. G.S.O. will send a check to cover most of your local expenses, such as lodging and meals. Generally, areas supply extra allowances also.

“Before you leave New York, make sure your committee members are arranging the times and places of the Conference reports you’ll give on your return.

“Upon arrival at the Conference, you’ll receive a complete manual with prepared reports, rosters, background information, committee assignments, staff reports, and other necessary information.

“Aside from what happens on the floor of the Conference, in your committee meetings and workshops, and at the delegates’ meeting, you’ll be enriched by informal conversations with your colleagues and with trustees and G.S.O. staffers. Many of your area’s problems and questions can be discussed in this free interchange. At G.S.O., you may also look through your area’s correspondence files and address lists, make corrections, take notes, and learn. Throughout the Conference, take notes for your later reports to your area.

“Finally, don’t plan any big social events in New York or figure you’ll make a few business calls there. The Conference schedule runs from 9:00 a.m. until about 10:30 p.m. — often later.

“And remember, even if you’re the new kid on the block, you’re just as important to the Conference proceedings as anyone else. Your voice expresses your informed area conscience. Your thoughts and your questions must be shared — loud and clear — for the benefit of all.”

## What Makes an A.A. ‘Leader’?

(From Bill W.’s article in the April 1959 Grapevine)

Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: “Our leaders do not drive by mandate: they lead by example”. In effect, we are saying to them, “Act for us, but don’t boss us.”

\* \* \*

Therefore, a leader in A.A. service is a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel: but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgment of his own — well, he really isn’t a leader at all.

\* \* \*

Good leadership originates plans, policies, and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its service. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

\* \* \*

Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can obtain, sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided, of course, that such action be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

\* \* \*

Another qualification for leadership is give-and-take, the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us all-or-nothing drunks. Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized by a series of improving compromises. We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then, it is truly necessary to stick flat-footed to one's conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are situations for keen timing and careful discrimination as to which course to take.

\* \* \*

Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their **friendship**.

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## CHAPTER VI

# Annual Conference Meeting

The General Service Conference holds its annual meeting in New York in April. Just what kind of meeting is this? Is it like a group business meeting — only bigger? Is it like an area assembly?

Delegates coming to their first Conference say it is beyond anything they have previously experienced in A.A. To begin with, the Conference spans six days. Then there is overwhelming evidence of the year-long work that has gone into the preparation of the agenda or program. The program is meaty; the delegates, trustees, staff members, and directors who participate are well prepared.

Of course, there is also a great deal of give-and-take discussion. Many people express themselves, informally and often emotionally. Conference sessions are by no means stiff. Delegates simply act like themselves — which, we know, is the way it should be in A.A. While there is full discussion on any question that seems to have various possible answers, everyone tends not to waste time, but to cover the agenda and to stick to matters that affect the movement as a whole.

Area delegates come to New York in April well prepared. They have already shared the experience of past delegates. Then, in the weeks preceding the Conference, G.S.O. has kept them advised of questions and problems that will be up for discussion. They receive a deluge of advance information, filling them in on actions of previous Conferences, on what the committees are, and on what reports they will hear (so that they can “preview” the Conference with their committees and **G.S.R.’s**). They receive just about everything practicable to let them know what to expect when they get to the Conference.

Conference committees are of great help in winnowing out the material that belongs on the Conference floor. These committees first meet early in Conference week, and go on meeting as frequently as they need to for full discussion of each item on the committee agenda and a majority opinion to present in the committee report. Or a subject may be reported as discussed with no conclusion reached. Anyone who has a problem or a complaint may go to a committee session and present it there. Frequently, there are hot discussions. Toward the end of the Conference, each

Conference committee chairperson reads the full committee report to the entire Conference. Every action of the report is then presented separately. An action may be accepted or rejected by the Conference, and ample time is allowed for full discussion. The total committee report may then be accepted, or the report may be accepted after the deletion of one or more items.

A Conference committee may meet jointly with its opposite-number trustee committee in at least one session. Usually, G.S.O. staff members are secretaries of Conference and trustee committees corresponding to their assignments.

These men and women from G.S.O. are Conference members (see below) and contribute a great deal of A.A. history and know-how to every committee and Conference discussion. However, the G.S.O. people are seeking Conference opinion, not trying to *influence* Conference action. Many of the matters brought to the Conference are those that staff, boards, or trustees or their committees have not wished to act upon during the year. They have felt that these matters were questions of movement-wide importance and so belonged at the Conference.

While no one can speak for A.A. officially, the Conference comes close to being **A.A.'s** voice. It cannot be an A.A. *authority*, but it can bring into free discussion problems and trends and dangers that seem to affect Fellowship harmony, purpose, and effectiveness. When an entire Conference (or a vocal majority) has expressed concern about a possible threat to our A.A. program, the Fellowship has listened. It probably always will.

## Who Conference Members Are.. .

At the annual meeting of the Conference in April, the area delegates constitute more than two-thirds of the voting members. The other voting Conference members are trustees, directors of A.A. World Services, Inc., and the Grapevine Corporate Board, and the staffs of both G.S.O. and the Grapevine.

(Such foreign visitors at the Conference may wish to invite may attend as non-voting observers only.)

A word about the nondelegate members of the Conference:

- The largest number are trustees (the General Service Board), both nonalcoholic and A.A.
- All **A. A.** staff members are also members of the Conference.
- The directors of **A. A. World Services Inc.**, include some trustees and staff members who are Conference members in those capacities.
- The directors of **The A.A. Grapevine Inc.**, include some trustees and members of the Grapevine staff who are members of the Conference in those capacities.
- It should be made clear that each Conference member has only one vote, no matter how many positions he or she may hold on boards or staffs.

Historically, voting ratio has never been important in that no issues have ever divided Conference decisions along lines of area delegates opposed to other Conference members. But it could conceivably be important sometimes. To take care of that **situation**, the Charter provides that, as a matter of tradition, a majority vote of the Conference shall be a **suggestion to the** General Service Board (the trustees), but a two-thirds vote shall be absolutely binding upon the board, regardless of legal considerations.

The structure of the Conference has worked out well; experience seems to indicate that it is practical. The Conference itself is not incorporated. But the General Service Board (board of trustees) is. So are A.A. World Services Inc., and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. This incorporation is necessary for the handling of funds and the conduct of business.

## ...What They Do

New delegates to the Conference are usually surprised at the heavy work schedule they face. It is a full agenda; a great deal of A.A. business is transacted in the six days of the Conference. A typical Conference has six morning sessions, five afternoon sessions, and several evening sessions — plus an A.A. meeting the evening before the Conference opens. Every other year, a visit to the home of Bill and Lois in Westchester County is scheduled.

What kind of business is transacted? Well, here is a random sampling of Conference Advisory Actions from 1951 through 1984. **It does not include all the most important decisions reached, and may not always show the latest Conference opinion on a given topic; rather, the selection has been made merely to indicate the range of subjects considered.** A summary of Advisory Actions (updated yearly to add the latest) may be obtained from the General Service Office, and each annual edition of the **Final Conference Report** lists the year's Advisory Actions in full.

(Conference Advisory Actions represent: recommendations made by the standing committees and approved by the Conference body as a whole; or recommendations discussed and voted on **by** all Conference members during general sessions. Reports of workshops and the delegates' meeting and answers to Ask-It Basket questions do not constitute Conference Advisory Actions.)

- Adopted resolution affirming importance of anonymity and approved its wide distribution to press, broadcasting, and other media. (Reaffirmed by two later Conferences.)

- In regard to misuse of the World Directory, it was recommended that the attention of groups again be directed to its purpose as listed on the inside directory cover. Recommended that this statement be used as a guide and not a rule, as it is not intended to interfere with free communication between **A.A.'s** in sharing experience and activities. That non-A.A. misuse be handled as in the past. (Recommendation reaffirmed by two later Conferences. A.A. directories now comprise four separate volumes.)

- Recommended that Bill **Wilson** biography be approved with the title “Pass It On.”
- Recommended that A.A. literature should have Conference approval. That all Conference-approved literature show an identifying symbol.
- Recommended that the video “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell” be produced with closed captions for the hearing impaired, at a cost not exceeding \$1,500.
- Approved Regular Contribution Plan and quarterly statements; favored Birthday Plan; approved acceptance by G.S.O. of one bequest of not more than \$100 from estate of deceased A.A. member. (A later Conference raised the ceiling to \$200; a still later one to \$300; a fourth to \$500.)
- Accepted Bill’s manuscript on the Twelve Concepts and recommended that it be distributed as a supplement to “The A.A. Service Manual.” (Manual and Concepts were first separate, then combined, separate again, and then reunited.)
- Recommended that a hard-cover book containing Bill’s letters, writings, and excerpts from the Grapevine, Big Book, “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,” etc. be published, format and contents to be determined by the board of trustees. (Result: “As Bill Sees It — The A.A. Way of Life.”)
- The restructuring plan was approved 92 to 24 to increase the General Service Board to 21, seven of whom shall be nonalcoholic and 14 alcoholic. (In 1966).
- Approved guidelines for group separation of A.A. and Al-Anon.
- Approved position paper on rehabilitation centers, to the effect that such rehabs, rest homes, and hospitals *are not* a part of A.A. and, therefore, have no responsibility to adhere to the Traditions of A.A.
- Approved the proposal that the first World Service Meeting be held in New York in the fall of 1969.
- Recommended that showing the full face of an A.A. member at the level of press, TV, and films be regarded as a violation of our Tradition of anonymity, even though the name is withheld. (A later Conference advocated anonymity on videotape, too.)
- Approved a survey within A.A. Delegates agreed to conduct this survey **at** meetings in their areas.
- Agreed that G.S.O. should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of A.A. members. Contributions are welcome from groups meeting in clubs.
- Recommended that when an elected delegate cannot attend the annual meeting of the General Service Conference, the alternate delegate seated at the Conference will be considered delegate until notification is sent to G.S.O. by the area committee that the originally elected delegate is ready to resume duties.
- Suggested that when a local A.A. facility (central office, intergroup, group, etc.) sells non-Conference-approved literature, it be clearly designated as such.
- Recommended that, ever mindful of **A.A.’s** traditional policy of “cooperation but not affiliation,” we continue to meet with organizations outside A.A. concerned with the problem of alcoholism, for the purpose of improving communications.
- Reaffirmed that all requests for A.A. directories from other organizations be referred to the area delegate. After inquiring about the purpose planned for the directory, delegate will make decision regarding its availability.

- Approved the Anonymity Statement presented by the trustees' Public Information Committee, with the following reservations: that it be made clear that disclosing one's A.A. membership to those outside A.A. be a matter of personal choice and not a matter of obligation. . . That the use of full names and addresses, where *indicated*, could improve communications *within* A.A.

- Recommended that family groups and alcohol-and-pill groups not be listed in A.A. directories or meeting lists.

- Recommended that all **G.S.R.'s** receive the group mailings from G.S.O.

- Agreed that G.S.O. should not be asked to intervene in local disputes or misunderstandings.

- Naming an A.A. group after an individual: approved the suggestion that an A.A. group should not be named after an A.A. member or nonalcoholic, living or deceased.

- A.A. group policy regarding "family" groups: reaffirmed that "Only those with a desire to stop drinking may be members of A.A. groups; only A.A. members are eligible to be officers of A.A. groups; nonalcoholics are welcome at open meetings of **A.A.**"

- Recommended that the General Service Board and the A.A. World Services Board of Directors consider reducing the net income from the sales of literature by appropriate means. Delegates should emphasize that this recommendation is made in anticipation of increased group participation and that further efforts to control literature costs to the Fellowship, the Conference structure, and A.A. unity depend upon a solid base of group support.

- Recommended that delegates be responsible for establishing area Grapevine committees, using the area and district service structure to achieve the goal of a Grapevine representative in every group.

- Suggested that groups meeting in treatment facilities try to abide by Tradition Seven; that, if money for rent is not accepted by a **facility**, groups contribute in another way; that **A.A.'s** employed by the facility not run groups at the facility.

- Recommended that delegates *never* have less than **66-2/3 %** of total Conference votes, but no arbitrary ceiling be set on the number of **G.S.O./GV staff eligible** to vote.

- Recommended that the trustees' Literature Committee undertake development of a daily reflections book based on individual **A.A.'s** (including **Bill W.'s**) sharing based on the Traditions and Steps, and that a progress report be submitted to the **1988** Conference Literature Committee.

- Recommended that the graphics in the flyer "A Message to Teenagers" be updated with the new graphics from "Too Young?"

- Recommended that the consideration of inviting intergroups and central offices into the general service structure be referred to the Agenda Committee for the 1988 Conference.

- Recommended that the General Service Board study the practice of rotation in our two corporate boards and committees.

- Recommended that the general manager designate a staff person to coordinate and pull together (at the General Service Office) all available information about

spreading the A.A. message to the native North American population, including but not limited to (1) translations of their languages and dialects, (2) experiences of various A.A. groups in their contact with these populations and to explore with a view toward consolidating and expanding A.A.'s experience in these areas; to report back to the 1986 Conference through whatever committee the general manager feels is appropriate. Since each issue of the Grapevine cannot go through the Conference-approval process, the Conference recognized The A.A. Grapevine as an international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous.

- Recommended that all Class B trustees be elected for a four-year term regardless of when vacancies occur.

- Recommended that the pamphlet "A.A. in Prisons" be replaced with two separate revisions of the material: 1. An easy-to-read pamphlet for inmates and outside A.A.s interested in starting A.A. groups in correctional facilities which will explain how inside groups are formed and how they function; 2. A brief pamphlet or leaflet to provide information about A.A. to administrators of correctional facilities.

- Recommended that the cartoon supplement of the pamphlet "Supporting the A.A. Support System," be discontinued.

- Recommended that ample time for Conference Committees to meet and conduct their business be provided for on the Conference Agenda.

- Recommended that the Conference Charter should appear in its original 1955 form in future editions of *The A.A. Service Manual*, with General Service Conference Advisory Action amendments and editorial changes indicated by footnotes, followed by the current version of the Charter.

- Recommended that an audiovisual presentation for Treatment Facilities including three minutes of sample footage be made and brought to the 1989 General Service Conference for further review, and that the film be appropriate for use by all other related committees, A.A. groups, and as an additional tool for our Twelfth Step work.

## Reporting to the Membership

The most productive Conference sessions are of little value unless area committees and groups back home hear about them. So the delegate's reporting job, covering about 40 hours of meetings, becomes as important as the program for the Conference itself. No delegate could possibly relate everything that took place; preparations of a digest of significant discussions, reports, and actions is suggested, and that is no small task.

Over the years, G.S.O., with the aid of area delegates, has developed a system of reporting that has proved to be a tremendous help to delegates and committee members eager to keep groups in their areas aware of Conference activities.

In a sense, the system starts with the advance information mailed to delegates. This gives them the background for Conference sessions. It "explains" the Conference, not only telling them what to expect, but providing the facts they need to "explain" the Conference to their committees and groups.

During the Conference, delegates take reams of notes. Much of the reporting material presented there is available in typed form, but these personal notes are a vital addition, to give each delegate some points of emphasis in the flood of information. They can turn a tedious recitation into a living, breathing report.

On the last day of the Conference, each delegate receives the "Early Bird" edition of **Box** 4-5-9, a printed bulletin that summarizes outstanding Conference actions and puts service reports into brief form. This seeming miracle is the outcome of planning and work. It is prepared before and during the Conference, as rapidly as final material is available. Every delegate can take home enough copies, hot off the press, to give one to each committee member.

The Conference edition attempts to give only highlights, although it may cover critical issues in some detail. A more complete report is needed, and this is the **Final Report**. It is published in the summer and goes into detail on reports, discussions, workshops, and actions. It is not a verbatim account, but no significant aspect of the Conference is deliberately omitted.

Throughout the year delegates and committee members are kept informed on G.S.O. activities, on the results of meetings of the General Service Board, and on the work being done by the various committees of the board.

With all this material provided for them, it is up to the delegates and committee members to get the attention of groups. Each year average group members learn more and more about the whole A.A. world. They discover that every event in the entire global service picture affects their own A.A. lives some time, somehow. The Conference is proud of its reporting to the movement. Largely because of this, the membership as a whole is learning to observe and understand the performance of its General Service Conference.

## 'How Do I Get Something Discussed at the April Conference?'

If the "I" is a G.S.R., a delegate, or a committee member, chances are he or she wants to discuss the idea first with his or her group at a district or area meeting. Then the idea is sent on the the Conference coordinator at G.S.O. That is the normal routing of problems and suggestions.

\* \* \*

An A.A. who is not part of the Conference structure and wants to reach the Conference can give the idea to the group's G.S.R. Or the A.A. can write directly to the Conference coordinator at G.S.O. There, the idea will be looked into, discussed with other A.A. staff members, and placed among the ideas, criticisms, and problems being accumulated for the next Conference.

\* \* \*

Other suggested Conference topics come from staff members at G.S.O. and from board and committee members. No matter where the topic originates, it follows about the same path to the Conference agenda: The A.A. staff studies it in the light of previous Conference actions, then passes it on to the trustees' Conference Committee and the Conference Agenda Committee. Usually, the Conference chairperson, vice-chairperson, and coordinator determine the best way of programming it — as a workshop subject, a proposal, or a committee concern.

\* \* \*

Complicated as the procedure may sound, it operates effectively to bring questions to the Conference, where meaty problems are welcomed.

## Can the Conference Act for A.A. as a Whole?

Here is what co-founder Bill W. has to say about this in Concept III, in his “Twelve Concepts for World Service”:

***“Excepting its Charter provisions to the contrary, the Conference always should be able to decide which matters it will fully dispose of on its own responsibility, and which questions it will refer to the A.A. groups (or, more usually, to their committee members or G.S. R.’s) for opinion or for definite guidance.***

***“Therefore, it ought to be clearly understood and agreed that our Conference delegates are primarily the world servants of A. A. as a whole, that only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective areas. Consequently, they should, on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference according to the best dictates of their own judgment and conscience at that time...***

***“Similarly, the trustees of the General Service Board (operating, of course, within the provisions of their own Charter and bylaws) should be able at all times to decide when they will act fully on their own responsibility and when they will ask the Conference for its guidance, for its approval of a recommendation, or for its actual decisions and direction. ...***

***“Within the scope of their defined or implied responsibilities, all headquarters service corporations, committees, staff, or executives should also be possessed of the right to decide when they will act wholly on their own and when they will refer their problems to the next higher authority.”***

## A Reminder about ‘Chiefs’ in A.A.

The Conference comes closer to “government” than anything else in our Fellowship. But, as Bill W. put it in the very first edition of this manual:

***“of course it cannot be too often said that while the Conference can issue orders***

***to the General Service Office, it can never mandate or govern the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves.*** The Conference represents us, but cannot rule us.”

## CHAPTER VII

# Conference Committees

Delegates carry the influence in the Conference, and this is felt in two ways: (1) They make up the Conference committees, covering just about all kinds of A.A. activities; (2) all delegates have free access to the Conference platform for discussion of all actions *affecting the movement*.

Were it not for committees, it is doubtful that any Conference could get over a fraction of the ground it now covers. As the Conference has grown in size and influence, the committees' importance has grown even more. Over the years committees have been added; each committee has been strengthened; all have ample time to meet and consider the problems before them.

However, no annual Conference meeting is "committee-run." A committee meets, deliberates, and may reach a conclusion, which is reported on the Conference floor for action. Or the committee may decide to pass the problem along to the Conference floor without adding an opinion of its own. But even if a committee reports decisively on its solution to a problem, the Conference as a whole need not accept the report. It can refuse a committee's decision; if it does, the matter is discussed and decided in general session. In typical A.A. fashion, a Conference committee does not represent "authority."

## Eleven Committees

Since the Conference structure was first set up, in 1951, need has developed for 11 Conference committees. Several correspond closely to work committees of the General Service Board, and each of the teams of committees meets profitably during Conference week. The joint meeting is designed to exchange information — not, usually, to take action.

The 11 Conference committees are:

- **Agenda:** Its opposite number is the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference, with which it meets jointly during Conference week and maintains contact throughout the year. Of course, this committee also meets on its own, as do all Conference committees.
- **Cooperation with the Professional Community** corresponds exactly to the board committee of that name.
- **Finance** has the same concerns as the trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee.
- **Grapevine:** At the Conference, this committee meets jointly with the Grapevine Corporate Board.
- **Treatment Facilities** has the same concerns as the similarly named trustees' committee.
- **Correctional Facilities** is the counterpart of that board committee.
- **Literature** meets jointly with the trustees' Literature Committee.
- **Policy and Admissions:** This committee examines only Conference policy. It has no joint meeting with any board committee.
- **Public Information** meets each April with the trustees' P.I. Committee.
- **Report and Charter** has no counterpart among trustees' committees.
- **On Trustees:** This committee and the board Nominating Committee have parallel interests and meet together at the Conference.

## Making Up Committees

Every delegate serves on a Conference committee. It is impractical to have them choose their own posts, since some committees might be overloaded; others, short-handed. Actually, the work of all committees is intensely interesting, as members discover after they have served. So committee members are selected by lot, and a delegate serves on the same committee in both years of the term.

At the winter meeting of the trustees' Committee on the Conference, the names of new delegates are drawn from the hat to replace outgoing delegates on the Conference committees. At one of its meetings in April, each committee chooses by ballot its chairperson and alternate chairperson for the next Conference year. The new chairperson takes office as soon as the current Conference is adjourned. Normally, a committee is made up of four or five first-year delegates and four or five second-year.

A.A. staff members serve as nonvoting secretaries of the committees; each takes the committee corresponding with his or her regular staff assignment. If it has a trustees' counterpart, the staff member is also secretary of that committee. The controller is secretary of both Conference and trustees' Finance Committees.

## How Committees Serve A.A.

How effective has the pattern of Conference committees been? What Conference

actions have they been responsible for? How well have they functioned between Conference meetings?

As in the case of almost any sort of committee, a great deal depends on the chairperson. If he or she is active, the committee starts to hum and keeps on humming.

However, Conference committees have another factor in their favor. And that is their secretaries, staff members, all vitally interested in the contributions of their committees. Every day, **staff members** are involved with the **same** service areas that are the committees' responsibilities. The committees are important to them as a means of getting answers to problems and indications of new service opportunities, in order to support their efforts in working with groups all over the world.

Down through the years, Conference committees have brought about many actions vital to **A.A.'s** health and growth.

The Finance Committee, for example, has kept abreast of the movement's needs since it first convened in 1951. It has looked into G.S.O. annual budgets, has worried about the income needed to carry out the service work, and has almost invariably recommended the expansion of services to groups and to the public.

The **Committee on Trustees** took the brunt of the **long-**standing argument over a practical ratio between alcoholic and nonalcoholic trustees — ultimately settled in 1966. The actual decision was a matter for the Conference as a whole, but the procedures for electing more alcoholic trustees were a committee matter, and the success of the procedures was a considerable **factor** in the final determination of ratio. The committee continues to be concerned with elections, slates of candidates, rotation of directors, and other aspects of **A.A.'s** unique version of "government."

The **Literature Committee** has played a vital role in the development of A.A. pamphlets and books. It has never hesitated to put the brakes on if it thinks **A.A.'s** literature list is expanding too rapidly — or to urge **A.A.'s** publishing operation into action when there is real need for a new pamphlet or book. In recent years, it has supported the first cartoon-style pamphlets, the publication of "As Bill Sees It," "Living Sober," the third edition of the Big Book, and "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers," and "'Pass It On', the story of Bill Wilson and How the A.A. Message Reached the World", and the development of audiovisual materials.

The **Report and Charter Committee** has always worked quietly but effectively, reading drafts of the **Conference Report**, checking them for accuracy of content, and returning them for printing as quickly as possible after the April meeting. This committee receives any suggestions for changes in the Conference Charter, and makes recommendations on them. The committee also reviewed and approved this manual. In addition, it is now responsible for reviewing changes in the format and composition of the six A.A. directories.

All changes in the Conference plan, all steps in the expansion of the Conference, and all procedures affecting the cost of the Conference have been passed before the **Committee on Conference Policy and Admissions**. One of its most recent accomplishments was the project for broadening the size, scope, and opportunities of Conference committees. It also has the ticklish job of approving or disapproving requests for additional delegate areas in a state or province, though there are now

few such requests. As A.A. groups multiply, the problem of reaching them via the Conference structure increases. Sometimes the committee says: Go ahead; set up another area. Sometimes it says: You need more districts, more committee members, rather than more delegates.

The **Grapevine Committee** is a valuable instrument for communication between the Grapevine and the Fellowship. It has been extremely helpful in clarifying matters of policy on the occasions when they have arisen. It brings grass-roots opinions to the staff so that the Grapevine can better serve A.A.

The **Agenda Committee** has the year-round job of communicating with G.S.O. on subjects for the Conference agenda and theme.

The **Public Information Committee** tries to carry the A.A. message and provides information about the Fellowship to the public. It is also concerned with anonymity breaks and misinformation about A.A. at the public level. And it helps the trustees' P.I. Committee gear its efforts to those of local committees all over the continent and abroad.

The **Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community** seeks to create mutual understanding and cooperation between the Fellowship and those professional groups and individuals concerned with alcoholism and the sick alcoholic.

The Committee **on Treatment Facilities** encourages A.A. members to assume responsibility for carrying the message to alcoholics in treatment facilities. The committee also reviews all aspects of service to A.A. groups in treatment facilities and makes recommendations for changes and improvements.

The **Committee on Correctional Facilities** encourages A.A. members to carry the message to alcoholics confined to long- or short-term institutions and reviews services to "inside" groups and institutions committees. It is also concerned with clarifying what A.A. can and cannot do, within our Traditions, to help inmate alcoholics while they are "inside" and upon release.

## Personal Views

### Former Committee Chairpersons Say.. .

"The Agenda Committee is of paramount importance to the Conference. It is the delegates' opportunity to make certain that grass-roots items are brought before them. Work on Policy and Admissions calls for understanding and patience. The Conference must guard against becoming an unwieldy body — but it cannot afford to become so restrictive that it fails to meet the needs of **an area or cross section of A.A.**"

\* \* \*

Our Literature Committee's goal, I think, is to make A.A. members literature-conscious. It would help if each delegate arranged the appointment of an area literature

chairperson. Area committee members bring information from the G.S. R. to the area literature chairperson, who in turn communicates with the delegate. Area delegates can then make a more comprehensive report to the chairperson of the Conference Literature Committee.”

\* \* \*

“The greatest problem our Public Information Committee had to deal with was in the ‘cooperation but not affiliation’ area. The committee worked hard to come up with better ideas and methods for meeting the problem. Then, we all learned through our meetings just what constituted an anonymity break — and how to avoid it and still accomplish our purpose. The experience of being chairperson will always remain a highlight in my life.”

\* \* \*

“Our Report and Charter Committee felt it a privilege to read the rough draft of the report and to make any suggestions or comments we wished. What impressed me most was the interest and dedication each of the committee members had for something they knew little about at the outset. Then, too, this work made me aware that we had a very meaningful charter.”

## CHAPTER VIII

# Area Activities

In the beginning, general service assemblies were held only to elect committee officers and a delegate to the Conference meeting. This was important. Without such meetings, there might be no service structure in your area today. But today an assembly (committee officers and members and **G.S.R.'s** meeting together) to elect is only a beginning. The *election assembly* is covered in detail in Chapter IV, while this chapter deals with other activities, which are the muscle and blood of general services in the area. It deals with sharing sessions, public information programs, filmstrips, and the kind of discussion that makes A.A. strong and vital. It deals with helping groups grow in number, strength, and influence.

(The district meeting — for the committee member and his or her **G.S.R.'s** — can use many of the same program **activities**; its needs also are considered in this chapter. Procedure for *district* election meetings is given in Chapter III.)

## How Frequently Are Meetings Held?

The majority of areas hold their assembly meetings quarterly or every other month. Some report monthly assemblies. When the travel distances are great, assemblies may be cut to semiannual or even annual — with more emphasis being placed on *district meetings*, readily accessible to **G.S.R.'s**.

An assembly is usually held in a convenient central spot in the area. But some areas rotate the meeting from one district to another. Growing in popularity are weekend assemblies, usually held Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, with all **A.A.'s** invited to attend. Most areas no longer hold assemblies in connection with state, provincial, or regional conventions; it proves too difficult to tie in business meetings with the kind of A.A. speaker program that makes conventions so

successful. (On the other hand, most state and provincial conventions are under the guidance of area committees. Convention programming is discussed later in this chapter.)

## Who Presides? Who Votes?<sup>1</sup>

Assembly meetings are usually conducted by the area chairperson, with the help of the other area officers and the Conference delegate. To keep agendas lively and meaningful, some areas appoint agenda committees, which include the officers and three, four, or more **G.S.R.'s**.

All area committee members and officers, all **G.S.R.'s**, and the delegate have one vote each in an assembly. Alternates normally vote only if the regular committee member or **G.S.R.** is not present. Proxy votes can be used, but this is not common practice.

The assembly should decide whether or not **G.S.R.'s** of prison and hospital groups are to have a vote. (Many do and find it helpful.) It should normally fix the amount of time permitted for a participant's discussion, and should determine whether a **two-thirds** or a simply majority is needed for an action. (Some assemblies find that a "sense of meeting" is preferable to the more formal vote on most items of business.)

## What Kind of Program?

A typical assembly **election** meeting is outlined in Chapter IV. This program deals with area service activities (with or without an election period):

1. Chairperson's report on committee activities since last meeting
2. Delegate's Conference report or recent communications from **G.S.O.**
3. Secretary's report
4. Treasurer's report (usually a good time to remind everyone of the leaflet "Supporting the A.A. Support System," useful for helping each group decide how to plan its regular contributions to A.A. services)
5. District reports — from committee members, on district meetings, district problems, growth, etc.
6. **G.S.R.** time — for ideas, opinions, and criticisms from **G.S.R.'s**
7. Sharing session (see page **S90** for procedure and suggested subjects)
8. Filmstrips from **G. S.O.**
9. Newsletter editor's report
10. Reports from treatment and correctional facilities chairpersons

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<sup>1</sup>See also Chapter IV, p. **S58**—"Who Is Seated?"

11. Public information chairperson's report
12. Special chairpersons' reports — Grapevine, A.A. literature, convention, etc.
13. Brief "information session" on G.S.O. services — conducted by delegate
14. Report from central offices or intergroups
15. Any local problems, ideas, and suggestions

## Some Ideas for Assembly and District Meetings

G.S.O. appreciates copies of assembly and district meeting minutes; also letters about the meetings. There is no easier way for the office to keep up with what is happening in the area— and no easier guide to the kind of help it can best render. Here are some ideas from the mailbag:

"The meeting considered the formation of a statewide institutions committee. **G.S.R.'s** felt they should first study the Guidelines which G.S.O. had provided and discuss that matter with their home groups." (Areas are now finding it practical to replace the general institutions committee with two separate committees: on treatment facilities and on correctional facilities.)

\* \* \*

"At our area assembly, we allow enough time for each committee member to report on district activities. We also encourage participation by as many **G.S.R.'s** as possible. The more sharing — the greater the exchange of ideas and solutions — the richer the harmony. Everyone benefits as the message is shared. (In election years, we limit committee members' reports to two minutes each.)"

\* \* \*

"We have not shied away from what some think are taboo subjects, like money and why we need it, length of sobriety for **G.S.R.'s**, etc. We always open the meeting with a 'state of the state' report — brief, to the point, touching on most of the subjects to come before the meeting. This lets the participants know what is coming and means better use of allotted time."

\* \* \*

"Our quarterly meetings are open to all who wish to attend. While the meeting itself is generally called at **10:00** or **11:00** a.m. Sun&y and is over by two or three, many of us arrive by Saturday noon, and have that much more time for A.A. talk. These Saturday afternoons and evenings have contributed greatly to the success of our quarterly meetings."

“Our assemblies run Saturday and Sunday. The first morning is a G.S.R. sharing session with our delegate as moderator, usually with a preannounced topic. We put out flyers for each assembly. The afternoon is a business session, followed by a short session with area chairperson as moderator, and past delegates telling how G.S.O. is set up and how it helps A.A. work around the world.”

\* \* \*

“Each year we have two general assemblies which **G.S.R.’s** and alternates attend. Our assemblies and our area committee have two objectives: first, to help the groups (this must come first or A.A. will surely die); second, to help support G.S.O.”

\* \* \*

“We found it best to keep business to a minimum and to use most of the time for sharing sessions. Generally, these sessions are handled by one or two past delegates.

“We call them ‘action meetings.’ One meeting, for example, had two short talks, each relating the experience of someone overseas and the help received from G.S.O. These small vignettes bring our worldwide services to light better than anything else.”

\* \* \*

“These (in my opinion) are the three ingredients of progressive service activities: first, well-planned agenda, with knowledgeable persons participating; second, clear understanding of which is area business and what is group or intergroup business; third, getting beyond the hard core of willing-to-serve **A.A.’s** and reaching the many capable people in A.A. to tell them about the rewards of willing service.”

\* \* \*

“One advantage of having district meetings became obvious when we received a news release from G.S.O. When it came to placing this, **G.S.R.’s** seemed much better informed about the newspapers and editors in their particular towns than did the committee members.”

\* \* \*

“Our district meetings are held every three months, prior to a regular A.A. meeting on Sunday afternoon. Location of meeting is rotated. Since beginning this method, our G.S.R. attendance has increased from 50% to 95 % .”

## How to Set Up a Sharing Session

A sharing session is a kind of meeting where everyone gets a chance to contribute ideas and criticisms about what is best for A.A. It can be set up anywhere for any group of people, but it is especially useful for assemblies and district meetings. It is aimed at drawing out the ideas of the shyest A.A., and somehow it keeps the more articulate from dominating the meeting.

In a sharing session, you may offer your opinion and never need to defend it. You have a chairperson or a leader, but more as a timekeeper than as a source of great wisdom. Here is how the session works. Let's say that the topic is "How can we get more **A.A.'s** interested in general services?" The leader, armed with a loud bell and a watch or stopwatch, reads the questions and explains the rules. Each member present may talk for one and a quarter or one and a half minutes, or more — whatever limit the group agrees upon. The leader starts with the first A.A. at the left or right. When that member's time is up, the bell rings — and on to the next A.A. After everyone has had a crack at the question, the leader starts around the room again. On this circuit, it is likely that many people will pass.

A single topic may take from 20 minutes to more than an hour. The session should not be hurried — nor should it be dragged out after the majority feel the topic has been exhausted.

An A.A. who knows shorthand should take down just the essence of the meeting. These notes will provide a mine of good ideas for use by committee officers, committee members, and **G.S.R.'s**.

**Good topics for sharing sessions? The** field is limitless. A subject arousing emphatic group interest is always desirable, such as:

- When a group's meeting attendance has fallen off, what steps can be taken to rebuild it? How can other groups help?
- Are "special" groups becoming more important — young people's groups, women's groups, stag groups? Is this trend good or bad?
- Sponsorship.. **the** hand of A.A.
- Group conscience, the voice of A.A.
- What kind of help do groups want from G.S.O.? How useful are **Box 4-5-9** and other regular G.S.O. services? How can they be made more useful?

Or sessions may focus on topics affecting the general service structure, such as:

- How can an area committee work productively with central offices (intergroups) in the area?
- What painless methods are there for getting a group to provide its share of the area budget and the G.S.O. budget?
- Are the local groups supporting intergroup or central offices, G.S.O., and the area committee?

G.S.O. will appreciate a digest of your sharing session ideas, as well as minutes of all your meetings. Such information on your effective activities can be extremely helpful when it is relayed to other areas on this continent and abroad.

# Help on the Annual Conference Program

Most of the agenda for the annual meeting of the Conference in New York in April comes from the A.A. groups by the way of **G.S.R.'s**, committee members, and the committee chairperson or the delegate. Every A.A. has something to say about the Fellowship's present and future — and a good part of it gets discussed at the General Service Conference. (Chapter VI covers this in some detail.) So one of the most important program items for an assembly (or a district meeting) is a good look at what might help A.A. on a broad basis. A certain problem may appear to be peculiar to your area — but it is surprising how many are found to be common to every corner of A.A., once someone brings them to light. This cannot be overemphasized; group problems make up a considerable part of the Conference program. Assemblies and district meetings are the ideal time to find out what problems and what solutions are shared by A.A. groups everywhere.

Another important activity of assemblies and district meetings is reporting the benefits of the annual Conference meeting to the membership. These gatherings provide ideal opportunities for reporting fully on what took place at the April Conference meeting, for querying the delegate in detail, and for deciding what problems need more attention at future Conferences. (More on this in Chapter VI.)

## How Areas Stimulate Interest In General Services

Time and effort have been the principal stimulators in most areas. The primary interest of A.A.'s is, as it should be, in their groups, in their own sobriety, in helping other drunks. While the work of general services has the same objectives, the connection is not always direct and obvious. Some stimulators are usually needed to get the attention of A.A. members, to show them that *service* can mean a number of activities that they may not yet be aware of. Here are two that committee members, **G.S.R.'s**, and delegates have found useful in arousing an area:

**Filmstrip meetings.** “Altogether, we showed the two filmstrips 239 times at group meetings. We have no record of the hundreds of questions about general services that were answered during that period.”

**Sharing sessions.** “We let committee members be responsible for running sharing sessions in their districts, then reporting on them at the monthly assembly. We created as many jobs as possible for **G.S.R.'s** and committee members and encouraged visitors to our assemblies, so they could see what was being done.”

## Communication Tools

These “communicators” are available from G.S.O. (Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163). By using them, you can show groups in your area the kind of help being offered to groups everywhere by their own General Service

Office, and thereby get more people interested in service activity.

**Filmstrips** (full-color, with sound, the first two also available in slide form). "P.O. Box 459" shows how A.A. services reach out to help drunks all over the world. "Circles of Love and Service" uses photos, sketches, and graphics to show how the parts of A.A. work together, from home group and area assembly to General Service Conference and Board; accompanying the filmstrip is a leaflet of the same title, with multicolor diagrams of A.A. service structure. "Markings on the Journey," made up of rare materials from our archives, pictures 45 years of A.A. history.

**Literature display.** Poster and format for setting up a display of Conference-approved pamphlets and books, many of which some A.A.'s have never seen. Also, **Literature Order Forms, listing all** pamphlets, books and films. Other order forms list non-English literature.

**Guidelines display.** Samples of all available Guidelines, covering service areas common to most A.A.'s. (See page S124.)

**Newsletters.** G.S.O. will send samples of service bulletins. (See page S98).

**Sharing sessions.** These are of great importance in the programming of district and assembly meetings. Service pamphlet on sharing sessions available from G.S.O.

**Tapes.** They include "Voices of Our Co-Founders," "Bill Discusses the Twelve Traditions," Big Book (opening section), and "Twelve and Twelve."

**A.A. Directories.** There are now five: Eastern U.S.; Western U.S.; Canada; International; correctional facilities.

**Conference Reports.** Each year's Conference is fully covered in the Final Report sent to all delegates and area committee members.

**Group Handbook.** Particularly useful to new groups, which receive it at no charge. Available to all groups at nominal cost.

**List of service material.** Covers many other items available from G.S.O.

## Working Together — General Services and Local Intergroup Services

General service committees and central (intergroup) offices traditionally have had different functions: Central offices provide local services; general service committees maintain the link between the A.A. groups and the A.A. General Service Board by means of the General Service Conference. So these two separate but vital service structures coexist in many areas in mutual cooperation and harmony, to the benefit of the entire Fellowship.

At the time that the Conference was started, there were already well-established central offices in some of our large cities, providing local services for A.A. groups and members. The same local offices still provide these needed services, and they have been joined by many more such offices throughout the A.A. world. Central offices are supported by the A.A. groups in the communities they serve. Each group

elects its own representative to attend central office meetings of group representatives. In some cases, these offices provide the following local services:

1. Receiving, distributing, and following up Twelfth Step calls
2. Answering inquiries about A.A.
3. Establishing local public information committees
4. **Maintaining** information about local hospitals and recovery facilities for alcoholics
5. Providing local A.A. meeting lists
6. Providing a newsletter (see p. S98 for suggestions)
7. Ordering, selling, and distributing A.A. Conference- approved literature

The Conference structure is the method through which all A.A. groups in a state or province (or specified area of either) can provide the most effective communication within the area and between the groups and their General Service Board and Office on matters affecting A.A. as a whole. These matters involve A.A. policy on:

1. A. A. Conference-approved literature
2. A.A. public information
3. A.A. cooperation with the professional community
4. A.A. activity in treatment and correctional facilities
5. A.A. finances
6. The A.A. Grapevine
7. The election of trustees to the A.A. General Service Board

The First Concept states: “The final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.” Each group may elect a general service representative (G.S.R.) to represent it at an assembly where the delegate is elected to represent all groups in the area of the General Service Conference. Thus, the link between the A.A. groups and their General Service Board and Office is established and maintained, and the General Service Conference becomes, as nearly as possible, the voice of A.A.

In areas where there are central offices providing the services mentioned previously, general service committees do not attempt to duplicate these services; but in those areas where there is little or no central **office** activity, the general service committee has frequently undertaken to provide many of these services.

## **Area, State, Provincial and Regional Conventions**

Conventions are a special type of A.A. meeting — usually weekend **affairs**, but sometimes extending several days. They are frequently set up and guided **by** area committees or by special committees appointed by area chairpersons. As if was pointed out earlier, experience shows that it is not wise to hold assembly

meetings during conventions, but occasionally they can be held just before or after.

Whether or not your area committee is responsible for conventions, these suggestions from convention chairpersons for setting one up may prove useful. Ask G.S.O. for Guidelines on Conventions, providing more information.

“We have a lot of geography between our two major cities. Made two mailings to all groups — offered baby-sitting and some rooms in our own homes. We invited groups from a distance to run our workshops, and had unexpected response. We counted heavily on support from local groups and particularly from G.S.R.’s. We plotted time of our meetings with anticipated driving time from remote sections. Made a gentleman’s agreement on turnabout — one year up north and next down south.”

\* \* \*

“The greatest problem was to get interested people from four areas together in one place to make plans. Finally, it was decided that the area chairpersons and delegates should meet, with a committee member from the local area to act as secretary. Our first meeting produced plans for a complete convention, with location and format settled. Each area treasury put up \$50 (which was repaid after the convention). We called it a ‘convention’ rather than a ‘conference’ to avoid confusion with the Conference. Now the committee meeting is held regularly at the site of the next convention, so facilities can be surveyed by delegates and chairpersons of the other three areas. The committee also meets at the close of each convention to sum up the proceedings and to set a date and place for the next.”

\* \* \*

“The first convention was really a means to an end — we needed some way to bring groups closer together. We needed something that every A.A. member could feel part of. Our permanent theme is Unity, so everyone knows our purpose. We brought as many in on the planning as possible — at least one member of each group. This approach has met with a great deal of success, arousing the enthusiasm of both older and younger members. The convention, we hope, will increase their interest in service work.”

## **When the Service Structure Needs Rebuilding**

Today, most areas accept the need for general service structure; the chief problem is how to increase area activity in order to help the Fellowship reach more alcoholics with the A.A. message. However, every now and then an area committee finds that it needs to build the Conference structure all over again. Here are two area situations

that chairpersons found very lean — and what was done about each.

“Let’s start with finding yourself elected area chairperson — where there is no area committee! How do you put one together? There is probably no easy way. Like our growth in this program, it must be slow and gradual, and a continuing process; but we have to have a beginning point.

“In our case, activity was started with letters, phone calls, and personal visits to **A.A.’s** and groups all over the area. A.A. members will cooperate if you let them know that you need them.

“Our area has a small A.A. population; at that time, there were only 30 groups in five districts. Groups were asked to elect **G.S.R.’s** and alternates, and they did. That gave us 60 for an assembly. Three committee members for each district gave us **15** more. Then we added five past delegates, four officers, and a current delegate. Starting from nothing, we now had 84 assembly members.

“Then we picked a central location and started quarterly assemblies. Urgent letters brought out good attendance. But there was still a lot of work to be done — the **entire committee** needed service education. District activities were started next. Round robins brought committee members and **G.S.R.’s** closer together. Later, a Saturday-night open A.A. meeting was scheduled before the Sunday-morning service session. **A.A.’s** were urged to make a weekend of it. Al-Anon cooperated, holding its committee meetings separately, of course, but at the same time. The idea caught on. Three times a year, these ‘little conferences’ built service activities. The annual area convention took over the fourth meeting.

“It has been encouraging to watch the growth of, and increased interest in, General Service Conference activities — among individuals and within groups. The picture has changed from a handful of **A.A.’s** getting together to elect a delegate to an enthusiastic, living, functioning area committee assuming its service responsibility. Maybe we are growing up a little and becoming responsible for our service activities.”

\* \* \*

“We pretty well started from scratch in setting up our area, following ‘The A.A. Service Manual.’ First thing was to reach A.A. friends all over the area, people with several years’ sobriety who knew something about G.S.O. and the structure of A.A. We asked them to serve as temporary committee members.

“I worked with each committee member. I visited groups and talked G.S.O. and G.S.R. to them — and, of course, found many **A.A.’s** who did not know what either meant. This has been time-consuming and tiring, but it has paid off. We have had many assembly meetings, committee meetings, and sharing sessions.

“All of this has been the most interesting and gratifying experience of my entire life. In my opinion, **A.A.’s** who never get into general services are missing much. They are not getting what they are entitled to in this program.”

## Past Delegates Can Be Helpful

“After I served my term as delegate, the full impact of being a has-been in Conference affairs hit me, with all of its loneliness and feeling of being separated from the heart and core of A.A.”

This past delegate did something about it. But many others do not — or feel that they cannot. It is true that A.A. has in past delegates a mine of experience that may not be getting used. The A.A. practice of rotation prevents delegates from succeeding themselves — and rather frowns on their returning later as delegates. Now gradually emerging is a role for past delegates that involves them in area activities, but leaves area committees and new delegates free to run their own show. It is suggested that past delegates not hold office as G.S.R.'s or district committee members, but **find** other ways to become involved in area service.

**A roundup of area experience shows that past delegates are frequently ex officio**, nonvoting members of area committees. They are called in from time to time for consultation or for a special assignment. Frequently, they are in line for committee chairperson or chairperson of a state or provincial convention. Or they may be appointed by the area chairperson to be responsible for area public information, or to urge more widespread distribution of Conference-approved literature and the Grapevine.

Another approach is the regular annual meetings of past delegates in a region (several states or provinces). It originated in the southeastern U.S. and is described here by one of the “founders”:

“The idea started with a breakfast meeting for past delegates, held in connection with the Southeast Convention (for all A.A.'s). This went on for several years, always functioning in a somewhat informal manner, avoiding all possibility of growing into hierarchy. Then it was decided that a single session each year did not meet the growing needs for complete communication and information. It was suggested that a weekend of informal meetings be held.

“They were, and have become a regular thing each February. At the first one, we found ourselves discussing and recommending actions that were not our concern, but the concerns of the many area committees in our region. We got back on the track, and now it can be said that we are in no way acting like an authoritarian group, but are interested in informing ourselves so that we can help interest other A.A.'s in area activities. I think loosely knit bodies like ours can help strengthen the lines of communication among the General Service Conference, G.S.O., and A.A. as a whole. Newly elected delegates and alternate delegates are invited to attend.”

## Suggestions for Newsletters or Bulletins

Newletters or bulletins published by area committees or central offices (intergroups) may include local A.A. news, information about groups and committees, and reprinted material from A.A. literature. As in most A.A. service activities, it has been found prudent to make a committee (rather than one or two individuals) responsible for the format, planning, and content.

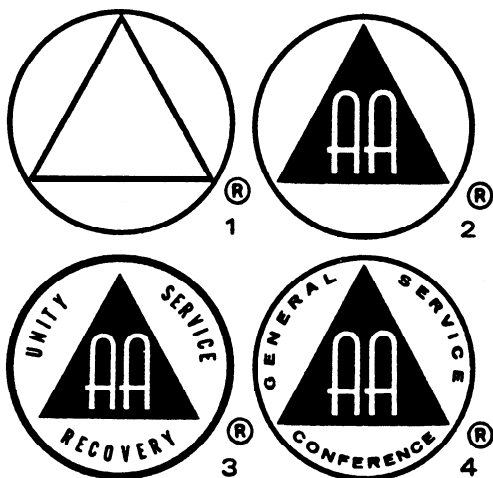
Many local publications quote from A.A. literature such as the Big Book, the “Twelve and Twelve,” “The A.A. Service Manual,” and Conference-approved pamphlets. When this occurs, please include the proper credit line, in order to insure that the copyrights of A.A. literature are protected.

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Any group or district of the Fellowship is free to use the A. A. symbol, or logo, of a circle enclosing a triangle, on its newsletters, meeting schedules, or other A.A. material.

A fourth symbol (shown below) is confined to Conference-approved literature only, and may not be used.

Perhaps you might consider these ideas, based on local experience with A.A. newsletters and bulletins: printing your newsletter on 8 1/2” x 14” stock (legal size); scheduling “theme issues” on some aspect to the A.A. program and using excerpts from Conference-approved material (with proper credit) relating to the theme; asking for and publishing letters from A.A. readers; carrying minutes of various committee meetings; running a “Calendar of Events” feature; conducting a subscription campaign (perhaps making announcements at group meetings), to build paid readership.



## CHAPTER IX

# The General Service Board

### (The Trustees)

*“The General Service Board (the trustees) is the chief service arm of the Conference, and is essentially custodial in its character. ...*

*Excepting for decisions upon matters of policy, finance, or A. A. Tradition liable to seriously affect A.A. as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the A.A. service corporations. . .*

— excerpts from the Conference Charter

A.A.'s trustees are, of course, concerned with everything happening inside and outside A.A. that may affect the health and growth of the movement. Because the trustees are close to G.S.O. activities, they are often the first to become aware of trends that may influence A.A.'s future. However, as the Charter points out, their duties are essentially custodial. Whenever a decision on movement-wide policy is needed, they turn to the Conference. And, because they are a part of the Conference body, they participate in policy-making — but only as individual Conference members, not as a group.

The trustees do much of their work through the two corporations, A.A. World Services Inc., and A.A. Grapevine Inc., and through members of trustees' committees. The two service corporations are responsible for the employment and direction of G.S.O. and GV personnel, and their work is covered in the following chapter. The work of the trustees' committees will be explained later on.

The chart “Structure of the Fellowship” (p. S21) shows how the General Service Board fits into the whole picture, and how the trustees get from the Conference whatever “authority” they may have. This relationship was established when the Conference structure was first set up. It has worked well, and there is every evidence that it will continue to do so in the future. Over the years, the only changes

considered essential have been in the composition of the General Service Board, not in its duties or responsibilities.

As Bill W. explains in the introduction to this manual, the General Service Board (the trustees) was originally the Alcoholic Foundation, with bylaws as broad as the continent. When the corporate name was changed to General Service Board of A. A., new bylaws were needed which would reflect more clearly the scope and direction of Alcoholics Anonymous. The new bylaws, adopted in 1957, are the work of the late Bernard B. Smith, noted international lawyer, long a nonalcoholic trustee, chairman of the board from 1951 to 1956. "Bern" Smith composed the bylaws out of his great love and respect for our Fellowship. They contain both the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. They are good reading for all A.A.'s and friends of A.A.

## **BYLAWS of the General Service Board, Inc.**

(Adopted April 22, 1957, by the General Service Board following consideration by the General Service Conference of A.A.; amended 1962, 1966, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1978.)

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Inc., now has but one purpose, that of serving the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is in effect an agency created and now designated by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to maintain services for those who should be seeking, through Alcoholics Anonymous, the means for arresting the disease of alcoholism through the application to their own lives, in whole or in part, of the Twelve Steps which constitute the recovery program upon which the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is founded. These Twelve Steps are as follows:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God **as we understood Him**, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (hereinafter referred to as either the "General Service Board" or the "Board") claims no proprietary right in the recovery program, for these Twelve Steps, as all spiritual truths, may now be regarded as available to all mankind. However, because these Twelve Steps have proven to constitute an effective spiritual basis for life which, if followed, arrests the disease of alcoholism, the General Service Board asserts the negative right of preventing, so far as it may within its power so to do, any modification, alteration, or extension of these Twelve Steps, except at the instance of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in keeping with the Charter of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous as the same may from time to time be amended (hereinafter referred to as the "Charter").

Members of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous are hereinafter referred to as "Conference delegates."

The General Service Board in its deliberations and decisions shall be guided by the **Twelve** Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, hereinafter referred to as the "Traditions," which are as follows:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., **as** such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The General Service Board shall use its best efforts to insure that these Twelve Traditions are maintained, for it is regarded by the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as the custodian of these Traditions and, accordingly, it shall not itself nor, so far as it is within its power so to do, permit others to modify, alter, or amplify these Traditions, except in keeping with the provisions of the Charter.

The General Service Board also shall be guided by the spirit of the **Twelve** Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous, hereinafter referred to as the 'Concepts' which, in their short form, are as follows:

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services shall always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.
3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of **A.A.-the** Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, **staffs**, committees, and executives with traditional 'Right of Decision'.
4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional 'Right of Participation', allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional 'Right of Appeal' ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service **affairs**. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future **functioning** and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustee.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Composition, qualifications induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth and power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never **perform** acts of **government**, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

The membership of the General Service Board shall consist of the trustees. Each trustee shall automatically become a member upon qualifying as a trustee, and shall automatically cease to be a member upon ceasing to be a trustee of the General Service Board. The sole reason for constituting trustees members is in order to comply with the laws of the State of New York, which require a membership corporation to be composed of members. Accordingly, except where distinctions must be made under these bylaws or as a matter of law, the words "member" and "trustee" shall be employed in these bylaws collectively.

As a condition of election as a member and election as a trustee of the General Service Board, each person shall, before qualifying to serve as a member and trustee, execute an appropriate instrument addressed to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, stating that he or she agrees to comply with and be bound by all the terms and provisions of these bylaws.

The Certificate of Incorporation of the General Service Board divides member trustees into two categories, viz., nonalcoholics and ex-alcoholics. The nonalcoholic member trustees shall be seven (7) in number and are referred to in these bylaws as Class A member trustees. The ex-alcoholic member trustees shall be fourteen (14) in number and shall be referred to in these bylaws as Class B member trustees.

Class A member trustees shall be persons who are not and have not been afflicted by the disease of alcoholism and who express a profound faith in the recovery program upon which the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is founded. Class A member trustees shall be ineligible to serve for more than three successive **three-year** terms to be confirmed annually, except that in cases of the impending expiration of the term of office of a Class A trustee serving as chairman or vice-chairman, the Board has the authority to extend this term if in its judgment this is in the best

interest of the Fellowship. The foregoing limitation with respect to the maximum term of service of Class A member trustees shall not be applicable to those Class A member trustees who are serving as such at the expiration of the year 1966.

There shall be fourteen (14) Class B member trustees. These Class B member trustees are designated in the Certificate of Incorporation as ex-alcoholic, only because in the common speech of man an ex-alcoholic is an individual who at one time imbibed alcoholic beverages excessively and uncontrollably, but who does not now imbibe at all. For the purposes of these bylaws, an ex-alcoholic as designated in the Certificate of Incorporation shall be referred to as an "alcoholic" which means within the terminology of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous an individual who has arrested his drinking and is living so far as he finds possible within the concepts of the Twelve Steps which constitute the recovery program.

All trustees shall be elected or re-elected at an annual meeting of the General Service Board. Class B member trustees, however, although elected at the annual meeting of the General Service Board, shall be ineligible to serve for more than four successive annual terms, except with respect to a Class B member trustee serving as chairman whose term shall be extended as hereafter provided for. Class B trustees shall be divided into three categories; eight (8) shall be subclassified as "regional trustees"; four (4) shall be subclassified as "general service trustees"; two (2) shall be subclassified as trustees-at-large. The general service trustees shall be from the New York commuting area; one (1) trustee-at-large shall be from Canada and one (1) from the United States. Class B regional trustees are expected to contribute their time basically during the four periods of the years, viz., each three-day period ending on the day of each quarterly meeting of the trustees of the General Service Board, and, in addition, to advise the Board with respect to regional views and opinions regarding policy matters. Class B general service trustees, in addition to providing services at the same time as Class B regional trustees, are expected to provide continued service to the Board during all of the times of the year.

While in these bylaws we refer to "member trustees" in order to comply with the laws of the State of New York, members shall elect the trustees.

In the event that any member trustee shall resign or shall die, the trustees may at any regular or special meeting elect a new member trustee to fill such vacancy, or, alternatively, permit such a vacancy to continue until the next annual meeting of the General Service Board. In the event that the vacancy is that of a Class B member trustee, the successor shall be elected for a period of four years from the date of the meeting at which he or she is elected.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Class B member trustees, as Class A member trustees, are expected, subject only to the laws of the State of New York and to these bylaws, at the request of the Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, to resign their trusteeships and memberships, even though their terms of office as member trustees may not have expired.

Proposed new member trustees to the General Service Board shall be nominated by a nominating committee designated by the chairman. No person shall become a member trustee of the General Service Board until all Conference delegates have

been polled by mail or at an annual meeting of the Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, as the Board of Trustees may determine. If a majority of the Conference delegates disapprove the election of such proposed member trustee, he shall not be eligible as a member trustee, and the member trustees shall, unless there is a 100% vote of member trustees present at a meeting to the contrary, have no power to elect such person as a member trustee. If, however, a majority of the Conference delegates do not disapprove the election of such proposed member trustee, he may be elected as a member and trustee of the General Service Board upon a vote of a majority of the Board of Trustees at a meeting of the Board.

The Board of Trustees shall have all the powers provided for in these bylaws and as are vested in a Board of Directors under the laws of the State of New York.

The Board of Trustees may by general resolution delegate to committees or to officers of the General Service Board such powers as they deem appropriate in the service of the purposes to which the General Service Board is dedicated.

The members of the Board, subject to the laws of the State of New York, are expected to exercise the powers vested in them by law in a manner consonant with the faith that permeates and guides the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, inspired by the Twelve Steps of A.A., in accordance with the Twelve Traditions, and in keeping with the Charter of the Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Other than the right to participate in the disposition thereof during the period of membership, no member trustee shall have any right, title, or interest in the property or assets of the General Service Board, and his right to vote or otherwise participate in the disposition of property of General Service Board shall cease on the termination of his membership and his ceasing to be a trustee.

The General Service Board may set up new corporate bodies to serve the purposes of Alcoholics Anonymous, provided the General Service Board shall own all of the capital stock of such corporate bodies, and if such corporate body is a membership corporation, its structure shall be in keeping with that of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Manifestly, the General Service Board is expected to refrain from forming any new corporate body if a majority of the Conference delegates shall disapprove of its formation.

In order that the General Service Board may more effectively serve the purposes for which it is formed, the Board of Trustees shall at its annual meeting or at any other meeting, if a vacancy shall occur, elect a chairman, a first vice-chairman, second vice-chairman, secretary, assistant secretary, a treasurer and assistant treasurer. The chairman shall have those duties generally attributable by law and custom to a president under the laws of the State of New York, with such other greater or lesser duties as may from time to time be determined by the Board of Trustees. The term of the chairman shall hereafter be not more than six (6) successive annual terms. The foregoing limitation with respect to the term of chairman shall not be applicable to the chairman serving as such at the expiration of the year 1966. A member trustee, once elected chairman, and if at that time the maximum period that he would have been eligible to serve as a member trustee would have expired, but for his period of service as chairman, then upon the date he ceases to

serve as chairman, he shall cease to be a member trustee. The first and second **vice-chairmen** shall in their respective order perform the duties of the chairman in the event of his absence or disability.

In order to render unto the law that which the law requires, the chairman shall be president, and the first and second vice-chairmen shall be the first and second vice-presidents respectively, but they shall at no time employ such titles, except as may be required for the execution of legal documents or by reason of other provisions of the law.

The secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, and assistant treasurer shall similarly perform those duties generally attributed by law and custom to such offices with such other greater or lesser duties as may from time to time be determined by the Board of Trustees.

An annual meeting of the Trustees of the Board, to be followed by an annual meeting of the members, shall take place in April no later than the last Monday in April each year, and subsequent regular meetings of the Board of Trustees shall take place on the **fifth** Monday following the close of a calendar quarter, with the proviso that special meetings may be convened at the request of one-third of the Board of Trustees, one or more regular meetings may be eliminated. All meetings of members and trustees shall take place in the City and County of New York, unless at a meeting of the Board, the trustees shall decide to hold a future meeting or meetings outside of the City of New York. The actual place and time of day of each meeting shall be determined by the chairman.

At least ten days' notice of the time and place of all meetings shall be given by mail signed by the chairman or, at his request, by the secretary or assistant secretary. The chairman at the time of the mailing of notices shall determine the order in which matters shall be dealt with at all meetings, and he or a majority of the trustees present at any meetings may always decide to modify such order.

Whenever in the judgment of one-third of the member trustees present at a meeting a decision to take any action involves a matter of principle or basic policy and in the judgment of at least one-third of the member trustees a delay in arriving at a decision will not adversely affect the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the matter shall be submitted to a mail vote of Conference delegates, and if a majority of the Conference delegates votes against the taking of such action, then the Board of Trustees will be expected to refrain from deciding to take such action.

Whenever a mail vote is taken of Conference delegates, at least two weeks' notice shall be given, and the vote shall be determined in keeping with an analysis of such vote by the chairman and secretary, or in their absence, by a vice-chairman and assistant secretary, at the end of such two-week period. An announcement of the result of such vote shall thereupon be mailed by the secretary or assistant secretary to Conference delegates and to member trustees.

At all meetings of member trustees, two-fifths of the member trustees shall be sufficient to constitute a quorum for the conduct of the affairs of the General Service Board, and the vote of a majority of the member trustees present at any meeting at which there is a quorum shall, except as otherwise may be provided by these bylaws

or by statute, constitute a decision of the membership or of the Board of Trustees, as the case may be. If at any meeting there is less than a quorum present, a majority of those present may adjourn the meeting to a time to be fixed by those present, without further notice to any absent trustee.

Because a stratification of the structure of the General Service Board is regarded as inadvisable and experience has taught this Board the great value of flexibility in serving its great purpose, no provision is made in these bylaws for standing committees. Committees shall be formed in keeping with the needs of service by resolution of the Board, with such powers as the Board may regard as then necessary. Committees may be created, discharged, eliminated, replaced, their powers expanded or limited, as the the Board may from time to time by appropriate resolution determine. Except as the Board of Trustees may otherwise decide at any meeting, the chairman of the Board of Trustees shall designate the members of each committee and the chairman thereof.

No member of the General Service Board shall at any time have any right, title or interest in and to the funds or property of the General Service Board. Should at any time in the future the General Service Board be dissolved, the trustees shall distribute the funds and property of the General Service Board for severance compensation to employees and to such other purposes as the trustees in their exclusive discretion and judgment shall determine are calculated to help men and women attain and maintain sobriety.

The Certificate of Incorporation of the General Service Board and these bylaws may be amended by the affirmative vote of 75% of all the members of the Board of Trustees. However, in keeping with the spirit and principles of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Board is expected, although not legally required, to submit any amendment or amendments of the Certificate of Incorporation and of these bylaws to Conference delegates, either by mail or at the annual meeting of the Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous as the Board of Trustees may determine, and if a majority of such delegates disapproves of such amendment or amendments, the member trustees are expected to refrain from proceeding therewith. Where, however, an amendment or amendments are submitted to Conference delegates and are not disapproved as aforesaid, the amendment or amendments shall require the affirmative vote of only a majority of the members of the Board of Trustees present at a meeting of the General Service Board.

## **Who Are the Trustees?**

The trustees are men and women, some A.A.'s and some nonalcoholics, who bring varying talents and backgrounds to the board. As the movement grew, the need was felt for broadening the base of trusteeships to bring in A.A.'s who had had service experience in different sections of the United States and Canada. The first major change was made in 1962, when the board was increased in size to make room for several A.A. trustees hailing from states and provinces away from New York.

In 1966 came the next major change. Until then, there had always been a majority (of one) of nonalcoholics on the board. Now it was felt that A.A. had accrued enough experience in running its affairs and had developed a practical method for bringing in trustees from a distance. So the Fellowship took the next big step and reorganized its board to include seven **nonalcoholics**<sup>1</sup> and fourteen **A.A.’s**.

## Our Nonalcoholic Trustees

Our debt to those who do not share our disease but willingly share our problems is immense. It goes back to the beginning, when men like **LeRoy Chipman** and Dr. Leonard Strong gave their efforts to help a new and perhaps risky movement. Bill W., in his introduction, has paid tribute to these “trusted servants.” There have been many whose contributions of time and effort and fortitude may never be reckoned. Our debt to all our non-A.A. trustees is a great one; it can be repaid only in terms of love and respect.

The ratio plan calls for seven nonalcoholics, each of whom may be elected to serve three consecutive three-year terms. They are nominated and elected by the board, subject to the disapproval of the Conference.

## Eight Regional Trustees

The map shows six regions for the United States, two for Canada. Each has a trustee who normally serves four years. In order that there may be a relatively even flow of new trustees coming onto the board, the terms have been staggered, and until 1975 some regions had one three-year tenure, followed by normal four-year terms. This is the schedule of elections.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Election Years</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Election Years</i>
Eastern Canada	1990-1994-1998-2002	East Central	1989-1993-1997-2001
Western Canada	1992-1996-2000-2004	West Central	<b>1992-</b> 1996-2000-2004
Northeast U.S.	1991-1995-1999-2003	Southwest	1991-1995-1999-2003
Southeast	1989-1993-1997-2001	Pacific	1990-1994-1998-2002

While no trustee can be said to “represent” a geographical section of the country — since all trustees represent only the Fellowship as a whole — it is true that regional trustees bring to the board’s discussions a regional point of view which is invaluable.

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<sup>1</sup>The change was not to affect the tenure of the ten nonalcoholic **trustees** then holding office.



2. Upon notification by the delegate of the plan to change regions, the General Service Office will provide a form to be filled in by the delegate indicating that the conditions outlined have been fulfilled.
3. The delegate from the area requesting a change of region will write, on behalf of the assembly, to the secretary of the trustees' Nominating Committee, stating the request and enclosing the completed form. The delegate will also send copies of the letter and form to the trustees in the two regions involved.
4. The delegate will ask the General Service Office to send a letter to all of the area delegates in the two regions involved, requesting that they obtain the group conscience of their respective areas on the proposed change of region, and that they indicate approval/disapproval on an enclosed card, as soon as possible.
5. Approval by two-thirds of the delegates from each region involved is required before the proposal is presented to the General Service Conference for its action.
6. A change of region will become effective at the end of the Conference at which it was approved.

## **How A.A. Chooses Regional Trustees**

A regional trustee candidate may be selected from each Conference area, or two or more of the Conference areas within a state or province may jointly propose a single candidate. This responsibility should be considered seriously by the A.A.'s in the region involved. It is suggested that the bylaws of the General Service Board, and the qualifications and responsibilities (both outlined in this manual) required to fill the trustee opening be reviewed carefully. By doing so, an informed group of A.A.'s will participate in selecting a candidate.

The following procedure is recommended for use in selecting a regional trustee candidate.

**NOTIFICATION:** Delegates and committee officers in region scheduled to select regional trustee candidate will be informed by G.S.O. in August mailing. G.S.O. will notify all A.A. groups in the region of the opening and suggested procedures through the October-November issue of Box 4-5-9 (mailing date: September 15).

### **PROCEDURE FOR ELECTION:**

1. **The** General Service Conference delegate (or delegates where there is more than one Conference area) and the area committees should decide how they will select a candidate.
  - a. Will the candidate be selected at a meeting of the area committee, or
  - b. Will the candidate be selected by an area assembly, and, if so, where and when will the assembly be held?

2. The Third Legacy procedure, particularly the principles of “written ballots, two-thirds vote, or the drawing of lots if voting fails,” should be used, whether the selection is made by the General Service Conference area committee or by the **G.S.R.’s** and committee members at an assembly.
3. The General Service Conference delegate or chairperson of the Conference area committee should send to the General Service **Office** a complete report of all procedures followed in the selection.
4. A resume of the Class B regional trustee candidate selected, covering professional, business, and A.A. service qualifications, with *name* and address, should be forwarded to the General Service Office, by the area delegate only, prior to January 1 by registered mail — return receipt requested. A special form is available for this purpose and should be completed by someone other than the candidate. Any resumes received after the established January 1 deadline will be returned by G.S.O. to the delegate in the submitting area, and will not be considered by the trustees’ Nominating Committee in the current election.
5. If an area’s candidate for Class B regional trustee withdraws after the January 1 deadline, that area may not submit another candidate.

At the Conference meeting in New York in April, a nominating session chooses one regional trustee nominee from the candidates. The session is chaired by the chairperson of the trustees’ Nominating Committee; the co-chairperson is the chairperson of the Conference Committee on Trustees. It meets in a roped-off section and may be observed by all Conference members.

Voting members of the nominating session are: (1) delegates from the region involved, and (2) an equal number of voters — one-half to come from the Conference Committee on Trustees and one-half to come from the trustees’ Nominating committee.

The slate of candidates is posted on a blackboard, and the session follows the Third Legacy procedure. This Third Legacy procedure providing automatic rather than optional withdrawal of candidates was approved as standard Third Legacy procedure by the 19th General Service Conference, and amended by the 24th Conference. This is the way it goes:

1. Withdrawals start after the second ballot. If any candidate has less than **one-fifth** of the total vote, his or her name is *automatically* withdrawn — except that the top two candidates must remain. (If there are ties for second place, the top candidate and the two runners-up remain as candidates.)
2. After the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third are automatically withdrawn; but again the top two candidates must remain, or the top candidate and all those tied for second place.
3. A fourth ballot is then taken. If no candidate has a two-thirds majority, the chairperson asks for a motion:
  - (a) to stop balloting and draw from hat.
  - (b) or to conduct a fifth and final ballot.

4. If (a) is carried, names go into hat and first one out becomes the trustee nominee. If (b) is carried, final ballot is taken, and if no candidate has two-thirds, names go into hat as above.

(The trustee nominee chosen by this session at the Conference is then elected to the board by the trustees at their annual meeting of members following the Conference.)

## **How A.A. Chooses General Service Trustees and Trustees-at-Large**

The four general service trustees, who must come from an area reasonably close to New York (see bylaws, page **S104**, paragraph 2) in order to be available for frequent consultation and meetings, are not elected in the same way as regional trustees. Bill had a sound reason for this, and one that has worked well over the years. These candidates are chosen from among the nontrustee directors of the two corporate board — A.A. World Services Inc., and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. They have the time and skills needed for the day-by-day affairs of the two corporate boards and, when elected as trustees, can share with the General Service Board the operations of A.A.W.S. and A.A. Grapevine, thus increasing the awareness of all the trustees on these matters.

As they are already serving (or have served) on one of the corporate boards, their qualifications are well known to the members of the respective boards, and it has been the privilege of those boards to propose the name of a candidate to represent them on the General Service Board.

Therefore, the resume of one qualified candidate, who has served for at least one year on the A.A.W.S. and/or Grapevine boards, is submitted to the trustees' Nominating Committee in a single recommendation. The trustees' Nominating Committee recommends the candidate to the General Service Board in April following presentation to the General Service Conference for disapproval, if any.

The trustees' Nominating Committee forwards the resume of the nominee to the Conference Committee on Trustees for review, and the nominee is then presented to the General Service Conference for disapproval, if any, in the report of the chairperson of the Conference Committee on Trustees.

The two trustees-at-large, one (1) from the United States and one (1) from Canada, are elected by the following procedure.

All areas in the U.S. or Canada (depending on whether the trustee is scheduled to be from the United States or Canada) will be notified of the vacancy and will be asked to submit qualified candidates, just as with regional trustee openings. The same procedure used in selecting a regional trustee candidate (as listed on page **S110**) should be followed in the selection of the trustee-at-large candidates (U.S. and Canada). No area shall submit an individual candidate for both regional trustee and trustee-at-large U.S./Canada in the same year.

Resumes of all candidates will be reviewed for eligibility by the trustees' Nominating Committee. Prior to the election meeting, each region will caucus (possibly at regional lunches) during the General Service Conference, with the regional trustee acting as chairperson of the session. Using Third Legacy procedure, the number of candidates from the region will be reduced to one for each region in the U.S. and two for each region in Canada. A maximum of six candidates for trustee-at-large—U.S. and a maximum of four for trustees-at-large—Canada will be presented to the voting members of the Conference for election. The names of the candidates will be given to the secretary of the trustees' Nominating Committee following the regional lunches.

The Third Legacy procedure as employed in the nomination of regional trustees will be used at the Conference to select one nominee for each vacancy, with the delegates from either the United States or Canada and the members of the trustees' Nominating Committee participating in the voting.

## **There are. . . Four General Service Trustees and Two Trustees-at-Large**

General service trustees are active on one or more of the service corporation boards and must be available, not only every quarter, but any week and sometimes any day for the solution of problems on which G.S.O. or Grapevine staff members need help. Because of this requirement, all originally came from New York City or its commuting area and were sometimes known as "in-town trustees." With to&y's faster transportation, a general service trustee may live either in the metropolitan area or within a convenient traveling distance from the city.

In 1970 another class of A.A. trustee was instituted, successively known as 'general service trustee-at-large,' "general service trustee — U. S. /Canada," and now simply "trustee-at-large." One (1) of these trustees comes from the United States and one (1) from Canada. They bring to the problems of a growing movement the kind of experience and training that can prove most useful.

While there are no "specialists" in A.A. — only recovered drunks — it has been possible to choose for general service and at-large trusteeships men and women with the kind of business or professional acumen that is particularly applicable to the problems at hand, whether their backgrounds are in publishing, public relations, or administration. This brings up the question of what qualifications count most in the selection of a trustee. . .

## **Trustee Qualifications**

A A. has been fortunate over the years in having so many competent trustees — both nonalcoholic and A.A. — that it has been possible to set up a "track record

**Nonalcoholic Trustees.** It would be safe to say that the busiest people have made the largest contribution and have shown the greatest dedication and the best judgment — like Dr. John L. Norris and the late Dr. Harry **Tiebout** — immensely busy people who somehow find the time to bring their fine talents to bear on our problems.

We have had wonderful treasurers, too, like **Archie** Roosevelt, who was not a banker but was deeply service-minded, Robert Morse, who was a banker and a planner, and Arthur Miles, their well-qualified successor.

The board has included a number of medical people — physicians, psychiatrists, and researchers. Each has made a contribution, not only in terms of a special field, but in the larger world of organization problems. The board has been blessed with trustees like Bernard Smith, a **fine** lawyer with a gift for balanced judgment, and Ivan Underwood, a foreign-marketing expert, with a vast knowledge of the customs and habits of the whole world.

A.A. Trustees. Experience shows that the A.A. trustee who is strong in one or more of the following qualifications has been able to contribute most to the solution of problems that come before the board:

**Sound Business or Professional Background:** Many trustees have brought extensive business or professional experience to the board. However, a broad background in these fields is not essential for every one of the 14 A.A. trustees. For the four general service trustees, it would seem to be a must. For some of the regionals, this is also true; but others can be light on this count if they are correspondingly heavy on the next two.

**Leadership: In** A.A. this seems to mean qualities enabling a member to help his or her group or city or area to grow with a minimum of friction and a maximum of good feeling. He or she usually has the love and respect of **A.A.'s** in the community, state, or province, and can represent the board and interpret its actions back home.

**Grasp of A.A. Structure:** Some **A.A.'s** have special aptitude for the A.A. structure and are thoroughly familiar with all of its elements, from group and G.S.R. to General Service Board and Conference. They are usually good “students” of the movement, familiar with its history and the trends that affect its future. A trustee with this equipment can bring useful perspective to board discussions.

In addition, there are basic considerations that experience has shown to be important to all A.A. trustees. One is maturity or time-in. The Conference feels that ten years of continuous sobriety is right for the regional trustee and the trustee-at-large, although not mandatory. For the four general service trustees who have experience as directors on the corporate boards, A.A. World Services Inc., and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., the Conference has approved seven years of continuous sobriety. Another basic seems to be **resoluteness** — having the courage of one’s convictions. The chosen candidates should bring to trustees’ meetings good judgment, objectivity, and the courage to express themselves.

Another important basic is **availability**. How much time does the candidate have to devote to this trusteeship, without hurting family or career? The regional trustees and trustees-at-large have time-consuming jobs. Each quarterly meeting takes two

or three days, plus travel time. The Conference in April calls for a solid week. Throughout the year these trustees keep in touch with G.S.O. and with other trustees. The four general service trustees all serve as directors of the two service boards.

## Trustees' Service Committees

There are several standing committees, and some of these are the opposite numbers of Conference committees. Membership averages about nine per committee. Normally, the chairperson of each is a trustee; the secretary, a G.S.O. staff member. The General Service Board recommended that there be a four-year limitation on service of an individual on a trustee committee, except for time served as director or trustee.

The **General Sharing Session** has replaced the Policy Committee. More and more, the various standing committees are making recommendations directly to the General Service Board. These recommendations, when accepted, constitute "policy." The Sharing Session encourages participation by all trustees, all members of board committees, and the G. S. O. and Grapevine staffs in discussion of a wide range of topics.

**Public Information Committee** meets monthly or every other month and is responsible for determining policies and supervising activities that increase public understanding of A.A. — or prevent public misunderstanding of the program. Some of its members have been selected for their special skills in communication. The committee corresponds to the Conference's Public Information Committee, with which it works closely throughout the year.

**Finance and Budgetary Committee** is a small committee, with the board treasurer as chairperson and the controller as secretary. It is concerned with all G.S.O. financial matters — including the Grapevine. It stays in touch with the Conference Committee on Finance all year, and the two hold joint meetings at Conference-meeting time.

**Nominating Committee.** This committee regularly passes on all candidates for membership of the General Service Board of A.A. (that is, the trustee candidates) and for directorship of A.A. World Services Inc., and A.A. Grapevine, Inc. In addition, some of its members become a part of the Conference session that selects regional trustee and trustee-at-large nominees, and all take part in nomination of general service trustees. The committee corresponds with the Conference Committee on Trustees, staying in communication with it between Conferences and meeting in joint session in April.

**Literature Committee.** This committee works hand in hand with the Conference Committee on Literature on a year-round basis. While its regular meetings are held quarterly, it is a very active committee, and its members spend a great deal of the intervening time reading manuscripts of new and revised pamphlet material and considering literature needs. The committee also assesses audiovisual needs and develops new materials of this type.

**Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community.** This committee meets quarterly. It seeks to create mutual understanding and cooperation between the

Fellowship and those professional groups and individuals concerned with alcoholism and the sick alcoholic.

*Committee on the General Service Conference.* At its quarterly meetings, this committee works on Conference procedures, agenda, and theme. Throughout the year, it shares the last two responsibilities with the Conference Agenda Committee and meets jointly with it during the Conference.

*Archives Committee.* It is concerned with preserving and organizing records of A.A. history already on hand and with seeking out further material. It meets about four times a year.

*International Convention/A. A. Regional Forums.* Meeting quarterly, its members work on plans for each forthcoming Convention and for the Regional Forums held as an experience in communication, whereby A.A. service people in the region requesting such a Forum share directly with people from the General Service Board, G.S.O., and the Grapevine.

*Committee on Treatment Facilities.* It meets quarterly, working to further the acceptance of A.A. in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and similar facilities, and to bring additional help to alcoholics under treatment there. This committee and the one following divide between them the functions of the old Institutions Committee.

*Committee on Correctional Facilities.* At its quarterly meetings, its concern is the alcoholic "behind the walls," whether in a long- or short-term institution.

*International, Newest of the trustees' committees,* it meets quarterly. Its aim is to find ways in which the board and the General Service Office may assist in the growth of A.A. worldwide, with particular attention to countries having no service structure.

## World Service Meeting Delegates

World Service Meeting delegates representing the United States and Canada are appointed by the chairpersons of the General Service Board. One delegate is appointed from the U.S. ; one from Canada. Both delegates serve four-year terms, and are generally trustees-at-large.

World Service Meeting delegates participate in two World Service Meetings, which are held every two years; one in New York City and the other in another country.

Qualifications for World Service Meeting delegates are: One of the two delegates should come from the General Service Board or the overall Service committee (in U.S. and Canada both are trustees of the General Service Board); delegates should have leadership qualities, genuine service interest, organizational ability, a knowledge and love of A. A., time to attend the world Service Meetings, and be fully informed on A.A. in their countries or zones. Perhaps even more important, the delegates should have the time to present and carry out the decisions reached at the meetings.

## CHAPTER X

# The General Service Office

(G.S.O.)

The General Service Office of A.A. (“G.S.O.” to most members) is located in New York, as it has been since the beginning. It is the hub of A.A. Activity and as busy a place as you can imagine. Something like an oversized intergroup or central service office? Well, something. . . but it is much bigger than most **A.A.’s** expect. It looks like a business office. It runs like an efficient business office — but definitely along A.A. lines. The spirit of A.A. is everywhere.

## What Goes On at G.S.O.?

A trip through G.S.O. is recommended for every A.A. who can get to New York. For those who cannot, here is a kind of “guided tour”:

The **reception room** features showcases and racks **filled** with A.A. books, booklets, and pamphlets, including translations of the Big Book into 14 languages other than English. Paintings of Bill W. and Dr. Bob remind us how our Fellowship started, and also on display are the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Preamble.

In the office of the **general manager**, day-by-day direction of the office is conducted. He is an A.A. and is responsible for the efficient running of G.S.O.

The **services director** shares, with the general manager, management responsibility for the A.A. staff, the archives, special projects and the files, records and stenographic departments.

In nearby offices are the A.A. **staffmembers**, known by sight to thousands of A.A.’s who have talked with them and heard them speak at conventions in many states and provinces — and by name to tens of thousands who have written in about difficult situations and have usually received helpful answers from these A.A. members. In this section of G.S.O., you will find all kinds of A.A. services and A.A. problems

being dealt with. This is the clearinghouse for matters affecting the unity and growth of the movement.

Busy typewriters in the **Stenographic Department** produce a constant flow of letters, minutes, reports, and copy for bulletins. As each Conference meeting nears, the pace builds up, to fill the Conference members' manuals with all the information needed for the week's sessions.

In the **File Department**, there is a folder for every A.A. group known to G.S.O., except in overseas countries having their G.S.O. 's. Some are loaded with correspondence aimed at solving all kinds of critical problems. Other folders are light. (Perhaps these groups have not discovered that G.S.O. stands ready as their clearinghouse for problems and ideas. Or perhaps they have no problems?)

You will also find at G.S.O. a treasury of A.A. history, the **archives**, holding old correspondence, early Conference programs and reports, and many other records of the **shaky** but brave beginnings of our Fellowship.

On the same floor is the **board/conference room**, where trustees, their committees, and directors of A.A. World Services meet. Along one wall are ranged photographs of nonalcoholics who have played important parts of A.A. history; on the other, pictures of notable places, such as the Old 24th Street Clubhouse and the tiny upstairs room that was once home to Bill and Lois.

In an average week, the **Shipping and Receiving Department** processes 500 to 600 literature orders -perhaps including your group's.

Employees working in the **Mail Room** handle each year more than 145,000 incoming letters and send out almost 38,000 packages — complimentary material for new groups, Loners, institution groups, P.I. committees, etc.

In the **Accounting Department**, the responsibility for getting out pamphlet and book orders begins; here, contributions from groups and individual **A.A.'s** are received and gratefully acknowledged. Here, too, expense budgets are set up and supervised so that A.A. can live and grow within its means.

The **Records Department** is next. Here, a manager and several able assistants handle the outsized job of updating the records on groups, delegates, committee members, **G.S.R.'s**, Loners, and Internationalists. This is where the backbreaking job of getting out the A.A. directories is largely done. Since communication plays such an important part in keeping our far-flung groups in touch with G.S.O. and with one another, the value of Records cannot be overstated. Yet this vital work must rely on the groups to keep G.S.O. informed on changes in their statistics -a thought to take home with you.

In the **Electronic Data Processing Department** a modem system permits all user departments, such as Accounting and Records, to process their work simultaneously. The computer will store information on group records, group contributions, literature inventory, and sales records and data. From these records, departments process literature sales, produce labels for mailings, process group-contribution statement mailings, and reduce the production of directories to a less monumental task.

# What Gets Done at G.S.O.

Perhaps you are more interested in what gets done than in how it gets done. In much-abbreviated form, here are 17 services that G.S.O. provides regularly. And by “regularly” is meant just about every day.

1. Help **with group problems**. The main line of communication is correspondence that shares group problems and solutions. Include here the A.A. directories and the bulletin **Box 4-5-9**.
2. **Special help to new groups**. New groups are encouraged through correspondence, complimentary literature packages, the Group Handbook, and the A.A. directories.
3. **Work with groups in treatment and correctional facilities**. Correspondence, bulletins, films, and the correctional facilities directory are regular services designed to help these groups start and grow.
4. **A.A. overseas**. Worldwide A.A. moves ahead rapidly in spite of the differences in language and customs. Conference-approved literature in languages other than English helps. So do special bulletins and — most of all — correspondence.
5. **Clearinghouse help to Loners and Internationalists**. The former are A.A.’s without a group, but many have helped start groups. Internationalists are seagoing A.A.’s, ready to lend a hand in a hundred ports. Bulletins, letters, and directories do their part.
6. **Conference-approved books and pamphlets**. A.A. literature has been the lifeblood of the movement. Editing, publishing, and distributing Conference-approved literature remain among the most vital of G.S.O. services. A new service is the development of audio visual materials.
7. **Public information**. Relations with the press, with broadcasting, and with films are as important to A.A. today as they were in the early days. G.S.O. takes the responsibility for contact on national levels. To meet local needs, material is exchanged with local public information committees, with area committees, and with intergroups and central offices.
8. **Anonymity breaks**. Upon learning that an A.A. member’s anonymity has been broken in the public media, G.S.O. gives this information to the delegate in the area where the break occurred and asks whether the delegate (1) will remind the member of our Tradition of anonymity at the media level, or (2) would like G.S.O. to write to the member. Usually, the Tradition has been violated just through carelessness or ignorance, and the reminder heads off further, breaks.
9. **Cooperation with the professional community** The field of alcoholism is now highly active. A.A. needs to keep informed and to relate itself to other work in the field in ways that will not violate its Traditions.
10. **Idea exchange for central offices/intergroups**. A staff member acts as liason between G.S.O. and central and intergroup offices, so that common problems and solutions can be shared.

11. **Self-support.** As A.A. grows and as new services are added, regular financial support is needed — for G.S.O., for area committees, for central offices and intergroups. The General Service Board encourages groups and individuals to keep A.A. self-supporting, insuring a safe future.
12. **General Service Conference.** **This** is a year-round activity, coordinating the program and arrangements for the annual meeting in April, gathering ideas and solutions from Conference committees, helping delegates to keep their areas informed.
13. **Area, state, and provincial conventions.** **G.S.O.** helps by exchanging programming ideas. Frequently A.A. staff members and trustees are invited as speakers.
14. **Regional Forums.** **G. S.O.** works on agenda and arrangements with the regional trustee and current delegates in each region that has requested one of these experiences in communication among A.A. service workers. Several such meetings are held each year.
15. **International Conventions.** Responsibility for programming, finances, and Convention facilities involves considerable advance work each year — for the International Conventions held every fifth year.
16. **Guidelines.** **A.A.’s** experience with police-court activities, A.A. answering services, clubs, etc. now spreads over many years. It is being made available in the form of Guidelines to any group, central office, or area committee requesting them.
17. **A.A. history.** **The** archives at G.S.O. go all the way back to the start of A.A. Early correspondence, directories, Conference data— all are being kept as part of **A.A.’s** living history.

## How G.S.O. Is Structured

The board of trustees is responsible for G.S.O. and the Grapevine, and it takes care of its administrative duties through two operating corporations. One is **A. A World Services Inc.**, which handles world services or general services, and the publishing of books and pamphlets. The other is **The A. A. Grapevine Inc.**, which does the editing, publishing, and distribution of the A.A. Grapevine.

The board of trustees “owns” both of these service corporations and elects the directors of each. While the board does not interfere with the daily operation of either corporation, it recognizes its own ultimate responsibility for seeing that both operate in the best interests of the movement as a whole.

In the makeup of both directorates, the principle of “participation” as detailed in Bill W.’s Fourth Concept is strictly adhered to. In fact, both are good examples of the application of this Concept. “If it wished, the board could elect none but its own trustees to these corporate directorships. But a powerful traditions has grown up to the effect that this never ought to be done,” Bill wrote.

A.A. World Services Inc., has nine directors, of whom at least four are not trustees. Some are volunteers, expert in office management and publishing; one is a paid staff member; another is the general manager of G.S.O.

Similarly, A.A. Grapevine Inc., directors are trustees, volunteers, and paid staff members. In the case of A.A. World Services, Inc., its president is the general manager. This principle of “participation” has worked splendidly in the cases of the two service corporations. It has resulted in the development of well-informed and highly unified directorates. It has ruled out authoritarian and institutional-type operating directorates, which **A.A.’s** generally do not like.

## A.A. as a Publisher

Very early, A.A. made the decision to be its own publisher, a decision that has meant a great deal to the unity and growth and general good health of the movement. By acting as its own publisher, A.A. can be sure that its highly successful recovery program is not tampered with by those who may be well-meaning but overzealous. The program and the Traditions go on unchanged — in essence and in presentation.

**A.A.** publishes all its own books and pamphlets and its own magazine. The addition of a new book or pamphlet is not approached lightly. First, the need is well researched by everyone involved in literature: Conference and trustees’ committees, the publishing company, and all A.A. staff members. In many cases, the need does not appear to be urgent or broad enough to justify a new publication. If the need is strongly apparent, work is started. The first four books were written by Bill W. Since then, all literature has been written by **A.A.’s** who take great pains to gather their material from all over the movement. From the first draft to the last (there have been as many as seven), committee and staff members — and frequently a broadly representative special panel — are free to criticize and to suggest, underlining what they feel will best express the A.A. point of view. This process takes time — months — but the results are worth the effort. When the pamphlet or book is finally completed, it is entitled to carry the “Conference-approved” seal, having fully earned it.



**A. A. World Services Inc.**, takes completed and approved manuscripts and prints and distributes them. It runs with business-like efficiency and provides additional funds, from literature sales, to help support services to groups and to carry the message to the public.

## How G.S.O. Is Supported

According to our Seventh Tradition every A.A. group ought to be fully **self-supporting**. That includes such pooled services as G. S. O.

All activities at G.S.O. are lumped into two categories for the purpose of reporting expenses: **service** and **publishing** expense. In the past, A.A. groups contributed enough to cover about two-thirds of the service expense. The remainder was covered by publishing income, which was in excess of that required for publishing expense.

So, in 1986, the General Service Board asked for a special effort to inform the Fellowship of the dangers inherent in this situation; particularly that a substantial fraction of the publishing income now comes from outside sources. The effort was begun to inform the groups about this growing problem. The challenge was to make G.S.O.'s service work **self-supporting through contributions** of the membership and to sell **literature at cost** to everyone.

The number and extent of services have increased over the years, but the **real cost** of service **per group** has decreased consistently owing to the growth of the Fellowship. However, all groups do not contribute to the support of the service work. Almost one-half do not. This places a heavier burden on the groups that do. What is more important than the dollar amount of contributions is that groups **participate** in this part of A.A. service work, as in the other activities which make groups full-fledged members of the A.A. community.

Most groups have found it convenient to set up a **regular contribution plan** whereby they send in a predetermined percentage each month or each quarter. For part of this-or to make additions to it- they use various methods. The **Birthday Plan** is the best known. On their A.A. birthdays each year, group members make their personal contributions (through group treasuries) on the basis of \$1.00 for each year of sobriety. G.S.O. will send special Birthday Plan envelopes on request.

Many groups have their own ways of getting their regular or special contributions together. **In Memorium** contributions honor the memory of a deceased member who was important to the growth of the group. Of course contributions of this type, like those of any other, can be accepted from A.A. members only.

In keeping with our traditions G.S.O. only accepts contributions from A.A. members, groups or other A.A. entities. Furthermore, the General Service Conference limits individual contributions to \$1,000 per year. This limit also applies to a one-time bequest of \$1,000 in the wills of deceased members.

# Literature Published by A.A.W.S.

*... we have seen the Foundation (the board of trustees), the A.A. book, the development of pamphlet literature, the answered muss of pleas for help, the satisfied need of groups for counsel on their problems, the beginning of our wonder@ relations with the public, all becoming part of a growing service to the whole world of A.A. At last, our Society really began to function as a whole.*

-Bill W. in his introduction to this manual

## BOOKS

Alcoholics Anonymous	As Bill Sees It
Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age	Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions	"Pass It On"

## BOOKLETS

Came to Believe. . .	Living Sober
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## PAMPHLETS

A.A. and Occupational Alcoholism Programs	In A.A. for You?
A.A. and the Armed Services	Is There an Alcoholic in Your Life?
A.A. as a Resource for the Medical Profession	It Happened to Alice
A.A. at a Glance (flyer)	It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell
A.A. for the Woman	The Jack Alexander Article
The A.A. Group	Let's Be Friendly With Our Friends
A.A. in Prisons	Letter to a Woman Alcoholic
A.A. in Treatment Facilities	A Member&Eye View of A.A.
A.A. Membership Survey	Memo to an Inmate Who May Be an Alcoholic
The A.A. Member-Medications and Other Drugs	A Newcomer Asks. . .
A.A. Tradition-How It Developed	Problems Other Than Alcohol
A Brief Guide to A.A.	Questions and Answers on Sponsorship
Carrying the Message Inside the Walls (flyer)	Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings
Circles of Love and Service	Supporting the A.A. Support System
The Clergy Ask about A.A.	This is A.A.
The Co-founders of A.A.	Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W.
Do You Think You're Different?	Time to Start Living
44 Questions	Too Young?
	The Twelve Traditions Illustrated

G.S.R.  
How A.A. Members Cooperate  
If You Are a Professional. . .  
Inside A.A.  
The Twelve Concepts Illustrated

Understanding Anonymity  
What Happened to Joe  
Young People and A.A.  
Your A.A. General Service Office

## *SERVICE LITERATURE*

Many groups rely on G.S.O. service literature; others don't know it is available. It deals solely with the experience A.A. has had with problems that affect group unity and growth. Single copies of the following A.A. Guidelines are available free.

1. ***A.A. Answering Services — shares experiences in starting an answering service, funding, staffing, administration, and use of volunteers.***
2. ***Armed Services — based on material received from active groups in the armed services.***
3. ***Central or Intergroup Offices.***
4. ***Clubs***
5. ***Conferences and Conventions and other area or regional A.A. get-togethers. These Guidelines, plus two displays, are sent when news of conferences or conventions is received at G.S. O.***
  - a. ***Inside A.A. Display — 4' x 6' illustrated poster in color, adapted from "Inside A. A. " pamphlet***
  - b. ***Material for assembling a 4' x 4' Literature Display***
  - c. ***It is suggested Responsibility Placards also be displayed (see Literature Order Form).***
6. ***Cooperating with Court, A.S. A. P., and Similar Programs***
7. ***Current Usage of A.A. Directors***
8. ***For A.A. Members Employed in the Alcoholism Field***
9. ***Forming Local Committees on Cooperation with the Professional Community***
10. ***Correctional Facilities Committees***
11. ***Treatment Facilities Committees***
12. ***Public Information — ways A.A. members work together to carry the message to the public***
13. ***Relationship between A. A. and Al-Anon — ways of cooperating but not affiliating***
14. ***Carrying the A.A. Message to Hearing-Impaired Alcoholics***  
***Literature Published by A.A. W.S.***
15. ***Finance***

## *SPECIAL LITERATURE AND SERVICE MATERIAL*

The Spanish Literature Order Form and the Translation Order Form for "Alcoholics Anonymous" (Big Book in 14 languages), sent on request, list items that may be ordered from G. S. O. Also available: Big Book and Twelve and Twelve in Braille; service material for work with the hearing-impaired.

## A.A. AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

### FILMSTRIPS

\*Your G.S. O. *Today*  
Circles of Love and  
Service  
Markings on the  
Journey

### FILMS

Bill's Own Story  
Bill Discusses the  
Twelve Traditions  
Alcoholics Anonymous-  
An Inside View  
It Sure Beats Sitting  
in a Cell  
Young People and A.A.

### TAPE CASSETTES

Three Legacies, by Bill  
Voices of Our Co-  
Founders  
Bill Discusses the  
Twelve Traditions  
Alcoholics Anonymous  
(The Big Book)  
Twelve Steps and  
Twelve Traditions  
A.A. Comes of Age

## DIRECTORIES

\***A.A. directories:** four-part annual listings of A.A. offices, groups, and contacts;  
**International A. A. Directory; Eastern U.S.; Western U.S.; Canada**

\***Directory of A.A. Groups in Correctional Facilities:** two-part, biennial listing

## REPORTS

\***Conference Report\*** annual summary of proceedings at the April meeting of the  
General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada)

\***World Service Meeting Report:** biennial summary of proceedings.

## BULLETINS FROM G. S. O.

**Box 4-5-9:** bimonthly; general news and notes; special departments cover public  
information, cooperation with the professional community, and correctional and  
treatment facilities activities; English, French, and Spanish editions

**About A. A. :** three issues a year; newsletter designed to inform professionals interested  
in alcoholism (the only bulletin aimed primarily at **non-AA.'s**)

\***Loners-Internationalist Meeting:** bimonthly bulletin of A.A. Loners (**Lone** Members)  
and Internationalists (seagoing **A.A.'s**); excerpts of correspondence and lists of  
names and addresses of new Loners and Internationalists who wish to get in touch  
with others.

\***Quarterly Report:** covers activities of the General Service Board, including A.A.  
World Services Inc., and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

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\*For A.A. internal use only.

## CHAPTER XI

# The A.A. Grapevine

The A.A. Grapevine is the Fellowship's principal magazine, with a circulation of about 128,000 around the world. It was started by a group of six volunteers in June 1944 as a newsletter for A.A.s in the New York City area, but immediately reached a wider readership when the editors sent free copies to A.A.s serving in the armed forces during World War II. In 1945, the groups in the U.S. and Canada voted it the national A.A. magazine, and since January 1949 its masthead has read "the international monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Most of Bill W's early writings, notably those in which he explained the Twelve Traditions to the groups, first appeared in the Grapevine. Bill also used the Grapevine to try out his proposal to change the ratio of alcoholic to nonalcoholic trustees on the General Service Board, and to introduce the General Service Conference to the Fellowship. For him the magazine was a primary means of communication with the groups; and in later years, his Grapevine articles amplified many of A.A.'s fundamental spiritual principles.

The Preamble (based on the foreword to the first edition of the Big Book) was written by the first editor of the Grapevine, and a number of Grapevine articles have been reprinted as stories in the second and third editions of the Big Book and in other Conference-approved books and pamphlets.

## Nature of the Magazine

When the Grapevine was a year old, Bill W. told readers: "We of the Grapevine once more affirm that this is your periodical. It will be the vehicle for your thoughts, your feelings, your experience, and your aspirations — if you care to make it that. While we can only publish a fraction of the material which will come to hand you may be sure that we shall do our fairest and best in making the selections. Always

wishing to reflect A.A. and nothing but A.A., it will be the ideal of the Grapevine to always serve, never to dictate or command.”

As a basic editorial statement, those words still hold true. The Steps, Traditions, and Concepts are the magazine’s guidelines, and Grapevine articles articulate these unchanging principles through the current experiences and informed opinions of individual member/writers. In addition to personal experiences of gaining sobriety and working the program, articles deal with sensitive issues — often in topical sections grouping different points of view. Wide participation is ensured through “PO Box 1980” (letters from readers) and an occasional “Your Move” section, which collects brief pro and con opinions on a given subject. The recently revived “Around AA” pages, published several times a year, contain news and information about the Fellowship as a whole, while “About Alcoholism” (printed each month on gray pages to distinguish it from A.A. material) brings news and views of the alcoholism field.

## Structure and Support

The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. is one of the two operating entities of the General Service Board, with its own corporate board, staff, and financial operation separate from that of the General Service Office. The board of directors has ten members: five trustees (two general service trustees, two regional or at-large trustees, and one Class A), three nontrustee directors and two A.A. staff members.

A volunteer editorial board is also an important part of the Grapevine structure. Its members, **A.A.s** with expertise in publishing, communications and the arts, act in an advisory capacity to the staff.

Grapevine staff, directors and trustees are voting members of the Conference, and there is a Conference Committee on the Grapevine.

Financially, the Grapevine is supported entirely by revenues from sales of the magazine and special items. In contrast to G.S.O., which receives group contributions to support group services, the Grapevine accepts donations only for a fund set up to provide subscriptions for inmates or other **A.A.s** who cannot afford the cost. Grapevine finances are reviewed by the trustees’ Finance Committee, and on an annual basis cash in excess of current operating needs is transferred to and invested with the General Service Board Reserve Fund.

## What Gets Done at the Grapevine

Primarily, publication and distribution of a monthly magazine; additionally, production of occasional special items related to the magazine. The Grapevine occupies the 11th floor in the same building as the General Service Office and there is an office force of twenty-plus people. The A.A. staff presently consists of the editor and managing editor of the magazine; the part-time art director is also an A.A. member.

All articles are contributed by members, with the exception of a few by nonalcoholics who know and love the Fellowship. Articles are selected for publication only after discussion and a staff consensus, and when needed, the help of the editorial board is called on. Whether or not a manuscript is to be published, the contributor receives a personal reply.

Each month, a group of articles is put together in a varied and balanced issue, set in type, and titled by the editors. The art director then designs the issue, makes rough sketches for the illustrations, and assigns the final art to volunteers, A.A. members who give their time and talent in this form of service.

The circulation department handles processing of subscriptions as well as researching and servicing any subscription problems. The Grapevine shares **G.S.O.'s** computer system, which produces mailing labels for the magazine and other mailings. The magazine is printed and mailed outside of New York City.

The accounting department, supervised by a nonalcoholic controller, handles orders for incoming subscriptions and special items, makes disbursements for expenses, and keeps the corporation's financial records.

A small mail and shipping department handles all incoming mail and ships out Grapevine materials.

## Special Items

Grapevine special items, ranging from anthologies of cartoons and articles to a wall calendar **featuring** member-submitted photographs, are spinoffs of the Grapevine. In recent years, cassette tapes have made significant magazine articles available to **A.A.s** who cannot read, who cannot get to meetings, or who simply want a meeting between meetings at home or on the road.

The Grapevine Workbook, produced in response to a 1986 Conference Advisory Action, shares historical information and experience drawn from the work of individual **A.A.s** and Grapevine committees.

## What Does a Grapevine Representative Do?

The **GvR's** job is to make sure that members are aware of the Fellowship's **international** journal and the enhancements to sobriety it offers. The **GvR** is the group's contact with the Grapevine office.

New **GvRs** should send their name, address, group name and group service number to the Grapevine (P.O. Box 1980, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163). They will receive quarterly mailings containing order forms for the magazine and special items, along with occasional special announcements and updates. Of course, the **GvR** reads the magazine regularly, announces its arrival at the group each month, and lets members know how to order subscriptions. The **GvR** also encourages the group to take out a subscription in quantity to sell at meetings-and if the group grows, to increase its order.

In most areas there is a Grapevine committee, and **GvRs** are active participants.

# Literature Published by The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

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The A. A. Grapevine-monthly

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# TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE

*by Bill W.*



*as adopted by the 12th Annual  
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on April 26, 1962*

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## **PREFACE**

The "Twelve Concepts for World Service" were written by Bill W. in **1962**. His introduction to that first printing, following this preface, explains its purpose, as relevant today as at that time.

Over the years the size of the Fellowship and the responsibilities of its service entities have grown immensely. Therefore, some details of the original text have become outdated and were changed in editions of the Concepts since that time, and a number of bracketed inserts were added.

Following the recommendations of an ad hoc committee of the A.A. General Service Board, the 1985 General Service Conference recommended that future publication of the Concepts be in the original 1962 version, with required factual changes provided as numbered footnotes at the end of each chapter. The only exceptions are certain footnotes written by Bill W. in the years following the first appearance of the Concepts: these are marked by asterisks that appear on the same pages as the text they refer to.

A "short form" of the Concepts was prepared by the 1974 General Service Conference for inclusion in the "A.A. Service Manual." It now appears in the Bylaws of the General Service Board, printed in that Manual.

General Service Office  
September **1985**

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# Introduction

The “Twelve Concepts for World Service” to be described in this Manual are an interpretation of A.A.’s world service structure. They reveal the evolution by which it has arrived in its present **form**, and they detail the experience and reasoning **on** which our operation stands today. These Concepts therefore aim to record the “why” of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.

Quite rightly, each new generation of A.A. world servants will be eager to make operational improvements. Unforeseen flaws in the present structure will doubtless show up later on. New service needs and problems will arise that may make structural changes necessary. Such alterations should certainly be effected, and these contingencies squarely met.

Yet we should always realize that change does not necessarily spell progress. We are sure that each new group of workers in world service will be tempted to try all sorts of innovations that may often produce little more than a painful repetition of earlier mistakes. Therefore it will be an important objective of these Concepts to forestall such repetitions by holding the experiences of the past clearly before us. And if mistaken departures are nevertheless made, these Concepts may then provide a ready means of safe return to an operating balance that might otherwise take years of floundering to rediscover.

There will also be seen in these Concepts a number of principles which have already become traditional to our services, but which have never been clearly articulated and reduced to writing. For example: the “Right of Decision” gives our service leaders a proper discretion and latitude; the “Right of Participation” gives each world servant a voting status commensurate with his (or her) responsibility, and “**Participation**” further guarantees that each service board or committee will always possess the several elements and talents that will insure effective functioning. The “Right of Appeal” protects and encourages minority opinion; and the “Right of Petition” makes certain that grievances can be heard, and properly acted upon. These general principles can of course be used to good effect throughout our entire structure.

In other sections, the Concepts carefully delineate those important traditions, customs, relationships and legal arrangements that weld the General Service Board into a working harmony with its primary committees and with its corporate arms of active service — A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. This is the substance of the structural framework that governs the internal working situation of A.A.’s World Headquarters.

Concern has been expressed lest the detailed portrayal of our internal structure might not later harden down into such a **firm** tradition or gospel that necessary changes would be impossible to make. Nothing could stray further from the intent of these Concepts. The future advocates of structural change need only make out a strong

case for their recommendations— a case convincing to both the Trustees and to the Conference. This is no more than would be required for the transaction and passage of any other important piece of A.A. business. Save for an exception or two, it is noteworthy that the Conference Charter itself can be easily amended.

Perhaps one more precaution ought to be observed when a proposed structural change is to be specially far-reaching. In such an event, the alteration should for an appropriate period be labeled as “experimental.” On final approval, an alteration of this character could be entered into a special section of this Manual which might be entitled “AMENDMENTS.” This would leave the original draft of the Twelve Concepts intact as an evidential record of our former experience. Then it could always be clearly seen by our future service workers just what did happen and why.

In other chapters great emphasis is laid on the need for a high order of personal leadership, on the desirability of careful induction methods for all incoming personnel, and upon the necessity for the best possible personal relations between those who work in our services. The Concepts try to design a structure in which all may labor to good effect, with a minimum of friction. This is accomplished by so relating our servants to their work and to each other that the chances of personal conflict will be **minimized**.

In the A.A. services we have always had to choose between the authoritarian setup, whereby one group or one person is set in **unqualified** authority over another, and the democratic concept which calls for “checks and balances” that would prevent unqualified authority from running unrestrained. The first approach is that of the “institutional” or authoritarian type. The second is the method of “constitutional” governments and many large business corporations in their upper echelons.

Well knowing our own propensities for power driving, it is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of “checks and balances.” We have had to face the fact that we usually try to enlarge our own authority and prestige when we are in the saddle. But when we are not, we strenuously resist a heavy-handed management wherein someone else holds the reins. I’m the more sure of this because I possess these traits myself.

Consequently ideas like the following pervade the Concepts: “No group or individual should be set in **unqualified** authority over another,” “Large, active and **dissimilar** operations should be separately incorporated and managed, each with its own staff, equipment and working capital,” “We ought to avoid undue concentration of money or personal influence in any service group or entity,” “At each level of service, authority should be equal to responsibility,” “Double-headed executive direction should be avoided.” These and other similar provisions define working relations that can be friendly and yet efficient. They would especially restrain our tendency to concentrate money and power, this being nearly always the underlying (though not always the conscious) motivation of our recurrent passion for the “consolidation” of world service entities.

Because of the large range of topics which had to be included, these Concepts have been difficult to organize and write. Since each Concept is really a **group of related principles**, the kind of abbreviated statements used in A.A.’s “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions” have not been possible. However, these Concepts do represent the best

summation that I am able to make after more than twenty years experience in the creation of our service structure and in the conduct of **A.A.'s** world affairs. Like the earlier written "Twelve Steps and **Twelve** Traditions," and the Conference Charter, these service principles are also the outcome of long reflection and extensive consultation.

It is much to be hoped that these Twelve Concepts will become a welcome addition to our "Third Legacy Manual of A.A. World Service," and that they will prove to be a reliable working guide in the years that lie ahead.

# CONCEPT I

*The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.*

The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services — those special elements of over-all service activity which make it possible for our Society to function as a whole. The groups assumed that responsibility at the St. Louis International Convention of 1955. There, on behalf of Dr. Bob, the Trustees and A.A.'s old-time leaders, I made the transfer of world service responsibility to our entire Fellowship.

Why, and by what authority was this done? There were reasons of stark necessity for it, and there were further reasons which have to do with A.A.'s fundamental structure and tradition.

By the year 1948 our necessities had become clear enough. Ten years earlier — in 1938 — helped by dedicated friends, Dr. Bob and I had commenced work upon a world service structure. Our first step was the creation of a trusteeship for A.A. as a whole. We called this body The Alcoholic Foundation; and in 1954 it was renamed The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This trusteeship was designed to inaugurate and maintain all of those special services for A.A. as a whole that could not well be performed by single groups or areas. We envisioned the writing of a uniform A.A. literature, the development of a sound public relations policy, and a means of handling the large numbers of pleas for help that might follow in the wake of national and international publicity. We thought in terms of aiding new groups to form and of furnishing them with counsel based upon the experience of the older and already successful groups. We thought there would be a need for a monthly magazine and also for translations of our literature into other languages.

By 1950 nearly all of these dreams for world service had come true. In the dozen years following the creation of The Foundation, A.A. membership had jumped from 50 to 100,000. The A.A. Traditions had been written and adopted. A confident unity had pretty much replaced fear and doubt and strife. Our services had unquestionably played a large and critical role in this unfoldment. World service, therefore, had taken on crucial meaning for A.A.'s future. If these vital agencies were to collapse or bog down, our unity within and the carrying of our message to innumerable alcoholics without, would suffer serious and perhaps irreparable damage. Under all conditions and at any sacrifice, we would have to sustain those services and the flow of life blood that they were pumping into the world arteries of our Fellowship. Among the A.A. groups it had been proven that we could survive great strain and stress. But could we stand heart failure at our world center?

And so we asked ourselves: What further precautions could we take that would definitely guard us against an impairment or a collapse? Nevertheless the period 1945 to 1950 was one of such exuberant success that many A.A.'s thought that our future was completely guaranteed. Nothing, they believed, could possibly happen to our Society as a whole, because God was protecting A.A. This attitude was in strange contrast to the extreme vigilance with which our members and groups had been looking after themselves. They had quite prudently declined to charge Providence with the entire responsibility for their own effectiveness, happiness, and sobriety.

When, at A.A.'s Service Headquarters, some of us began to apply this tested principle of "stop, look, and listen" to A.A.'s world affairs, it was widely thought that we must be foolish worriers who lacked faith. Many said, "Why change? Things are going fine!" "Why call in delegates from all over the country? That means expense and politics, and we don't want either." And the clincher was always, "Let's keep it simple."

Such reactions were natural enough. The average member, preoccupied with his group life and his own "twelfth stepping," knew almost nothing of A.A.'s world services. Not one member in a thousand could tell who our Trustees were. Not one in a hundred had the least idea what had been done for A.A.'s general welfare. Tens of thousands already owed their chance at sobriety to the little noticed activity of our Trustees and general services. But few realized that this was true.

Among the Trustees themselves, a sharp division of opinion was developed. For a long time most of them had strongly opposed calling together a representative conference of A.A. delegates, to whom they would become accountable. They thought that the risks were immense and that politics, confusion, expense, and fruitless strife surely would result. It was true that the woes of much lesser undertakings, such as local A.A. services and clubs, had sometimes been great. Hence the conviction was widespread that calamity would be in the making if ever a conference representing all of A.A. were assembled. These arguments were not without merit; they were difficult to contest.

However, in 1948, there occurred an event that shook us all. It became known that Dr. Bob was suffering from a fatal illness. As nothing else could, this news drove home the hard fact that he and I were almost the sole links between our virtually unknown Trustees and the movement they served. The Trustees always had relied heavily upon Dr. Bob and me for advice. They had taken a firm grip on money expenditures, but they necessarily turned to us every time that A.A. policy questions arose. Then, too, the groups of that time did not really rely much on the Trustees for the management of their service affairs; they were still looking to Dr. Bob and me. So here was a society whose total functioning was still largely dependent upon the credit and the confidence which, for the time being, its founders happened to enjoy.

The fact had to be faced that A.A.'s founders were perishable. When Dr. Bob and I had gone, who would then advise the Trustees; who could link our little-known Board to our thousands of groups? For the first time it was seen that only a representative conference could take the place of Dr. Bob and me. This gap simply had to be filled without delay. Such a dangerous open end in our affairs could not be tolerated.

Regardless of trouble or expense, we had to call an A.A. General Service Conference and deliver our world services into its permanent keeping. It took little imagination to see that future collapse would be the certain penalty if we did not act boldly and decisively. Thus propelled by events, we did take the necessary action. Now that the Conference is in its second decade, we find that our former fears of the troubles a Conference might involve were largely groundless. The results of the Conference have exceeded our highest expectations. It now stands proven that the A.A. groups can and will take the final responsibility for their world services.

There were other reasons for this basic shift of ultimate responsibility and authority to A.A. as a whole. These reasons center around Tradition Two, which declares, "For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

Tradition Two, like all the A.A. Traditions, is the voice of experience, based upon the trials of thousands of groups in our pioneering time. The main principles of Tradition Two are crystal clear: the A.A. groups are to be the **final** authority; their leaders are to be entrusted with delegated responsibilities only.

Tradition Two had been written in 1945, and our Trustees had then authorized its publication. But it was not until **1951** that the first experimental General Service Conference was called to see whether Tradition **Two** could be successfully applied to A.A. as a whole, including its Trustees and founders. It had to be found out whether the A.A. groups, by virtue of this Conference, could and would assume the ultimate responsibility for their world service operation. It took five years more for all of us to be convinced that Tradition Two was for everybody. But at St. Louis in **1955**, we knew that our General Service Conference — truly representing the conscience of A.A. world-wide — was going to work and work permanently.

Perhaps many of us are still vague about the "group conscience" of Alcoholics Anonymous, about what it really is.

Throughout the entire world to&y we are witnessing the breakdown of "group conscience." It has always been the hope of democratic nations that their citizens would always be enlightened enough, moral enough, and responsible enough to manage their own **affairs** through chosen representatives. But in many self-governing countries we are now seeing the inroads of ignorance, apathy, and power-seeking upon democratic systems. Their spiritual resources of right purpose and collective intelligence are waning. Consequently many a land has become so helpless that the only answer is dictatorship.

Happily for us, there seems little prospect of such a calamity in A.A. The life of each individual and of each group is built around our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We very well know that the penalty for extensive disobedience to these principles is death for the individual and dissolution for the group. An even greater force for **A.A.'s** unity is the compelling love that we have for our fellow members and for the principles upon which our lives today are founded.

Therefore we believe that we see in our Fellowship a spiritualized society characterized by enough enlightenment, enough responsibility, and enough love of man

and of God to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions. We are confident **that** we can rely upon Tradition Two, our group conscience and its trusted servants. Hence it is with a sense of great security that we old-timers have now fully vested in **A.A.'s** General Service Conference the authority for giving shape — through the labors of its chosen Delegates, Trustees, and service workers — to the destiny that we trust God in His wisdom is holding in store for all of us.

# CONCEPT II

***When, in 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference — excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter — the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.***

It is self-evident that the thousands of A.A. groups and the many thousands of A.A. members, scattered as they are all over the globe, cannot *of themselves* actually manage and conduct our manifold world services. The group conscience is out there among them, and so are the needed funds. The power of the groups and members to alter their world service structure and to criticize its operation is virtually supreme. They have all of the final responsibility and authority that there is. The operation is really theirs; they really own it. This has been true ever since the groups took over **from** the founders and old-timers at St. Louis in 1955.

But an ultimate authority and responsibility in the A.A. groups for world services — if that is all there were to it — could not amount to anything. Nothing could be accomplished on that basis alone. In order to get effective action, the groups must delegate the actual operational authority to chosen service representatives who are fully empowered to speak and to act for them. The group conscience of A.A. could not be heard unless a properly chosen Conference were fully trusted to speak for it respecting most matters of world service. Hence the principle of amply delegated authority and responsibility to “trusted servants” must be implicit from the top to the bottom of our active structure of service. This is the clear implication of **A.A.’s Tradition Two**.

Even from the beginning, large delegations of service authority had to be the rule. It will be recalled how, in **1937**, the Akron and New York Groups authorized Dr. Bob and me to create over-all services which could spread the A.A. message worldwide. Those two fledgling groups gave to us the authority to create and manage world services. Following their action, we held both the final responsibility and the immediate authorization to get this project underway and keep it going. On our own, however, we knew we could do little, and so we had to find trusted servants who in turn would help us. As time went by, we found that we had to delegate to these

friends a very large part of our own authority and responsibility. That process of delegation was as follows:

First of all, Dr. Bob transferred nearly all of **his** immediate responsibility for the creation of world service to me. In New York we stood a better chance of finding friends and funds, and we saw that our world service center consequently would have to be located in that city. I started the search for trusted nonalcoholic friends who could help, and in 1938 The Alcoholic Foundation was formed as a small trusteeship of A.A. members and our nonalcoholic friends.

At first the Trustees of our new Foundation took jurisdiction over money matters only. Little by little, however, they were obliged to assume many other responsibilities, because I alone could not discharge these on any permanent basis. Hence I gave the Trustees added responsibility and corresponding authority as fast as possible.

For example, in 1940, a year after the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" was published, we all saw that this great new asset had to be put in trust for our whole Fellowship. Therefore the stock ownership of Works Publishing, Inc.\* (a publishing corporation which I helped to separately organize) was turned over to the Board of Trustees.

Nearly all of the income from the A.A. book was then needed to finance the over-all service office that we had set up for A.A. The Trustees, therefore, presently took over the primary management of office operation, because they were now responsible for the funds upon which its support depended. Consequently, so far as financial decisions were concerned, I became an adviser only. Another sizable chunk of my original authority was thus delegated. When, in 1941, the A.A. groups began to send contributions to The Alcoholic Foundation for support of our over-all service office, the Trustees' control of our world service monies became complete.

After some time it became apparent that **A.A.'s** public relations, a vital matter indeed, could not continue to be entrusted to me alone. Therefore the A.A. groups were asked to give the Trustees of the Foundation complete control in this critical area. Later on, the Trustees took jurisdiction over our national magazine, "The A.A. Grapevine," which had been separately organized by another group of volunteers.

Thus it went with every one of our world services. I still functioned in an advisory capacity in our Headquarters operation, but the Board of Trustees was in full legal charge of all our **affairs**. As Dr. Bob and I looked to the future, it was clear that ample delegation to the Board was the only possible way.

Notwithstanding these delegations, Dr. Bob and I did quite properly feel that we still held an ultimate responsibility to A.A., and to the future, for the proper organization and structuring of our A.A. world services. If anything were to go wrong with them, we would be held accountable, because the groups still looked to us, rather than to their then little-known Trustees, for leadership in **A.A.'s** world affairs.

In the course of these developments the great difference between **ultimate** and **immediate** service authority became apparent.

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\*Works Publishing, Inc. was later renamed A.A. Publishing, Inc. **Today** A.A. Publishing is a division of A.A. World Services, Inc.

As early as 1945 it began to be evident that the co-founders' ultimate responsibility and authority for services should never be wholly vested in a Board of Trustees. Certainly our Trustees must be given a large share of the active and immediate responsibility. But the ultimate and final responsibility which Dr. Bob and I still possessed simply could not be transferred to a self-appointing Board which was relatively unknown among A.A.'s as a whole. But where, then, would our ultimate responsibility for world services finally be lodged? And what would become of my own leadership in world service matters? A.A.'s history now shows where the ultimate authority finally went. At St. Louis it went from Dr. Bob and me to the A.A. groups themselves.

But the groups' acceptance of ultimate service authority and responsibility was not enough. No matter what authority the groups had, they could not meet their new responsibilities until they had actually delegated most of the active ones. It was precisely in order to meet this need that the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous was given the general responsibility for the maintenance of A.A.'s world services and so became the service conscience for A.A. as a whole.

Exactly as Dr. Bob and I earlier had found it necessary to delegate a large part of our active authority to the Trustees, so have the A.A. groups since found it necessary to delegate these same powers to their General Service Conference. The final say — the ultimate sanction in matters of large importance — has not been given to the Trustees alone. By the Conference Charter, confirmed at St. Louis, this authority is now delegated to the A.A. groups and thence to their Conference, a body which is a representative cross section of our entire Fellowship.

***Therefore the General Service Conference of A.A. — plus any later formed sections — has become for nearly every practical purpose the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.***

In making this momentous transfer, we old-timers deeply hope that we have avoided those pitfalls into which societies have so often fallen because their originators have failed, during their lifetimes, to properly delegate and distribute their own authority, responsibility, and leadership.

# CONCEPT III

***As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the groups, the Conference, the A.A. General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs, committees and executives, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional "Right of Decision."***

Within the framework of their general responsibilities, whether these be defined by charter, by resolution, or by custom, it should be the traditional right of all world service boards, committees, and executives to decide which problems they will dispose of themselves and upon which matters they will report, consult, or ask specific directions. We ought to trust our world servants with these discretions, because otherwise no effective leadership can be possible. Let us consider in detail, therefore, why the need for a "right of decision" in our leadership is imperative, and let us examine how this principle can be applied practically in all levels of our structure of world service.

We have seen how the A.A. groups, under the concept of the "group conscience," are today holding the ultimate authority and the final responsibility for world services. We have also noted how, by reason of the Conference Charter and the "trusted servant" provision of Tradition Two, the groups have delegated to their General Service Conference full authority to manage and conduct A.A.'s world affairs.

The Conference and General Service Board Charters in broad terms define the responsibility of the Conference to act on behalf of A.A. as a whole. In these two documents a necessarily large area of delegated service authority and responsibility has been staked out. These instruments, in a general way, describe the relation between the groups, the Conference, the Trustees, and the active service units. These broad definitions and descriptions are an indispensable frame of reference, and we could not function without them.

Nevertheless it has long been evident that these highly important Charter provisions cannot *by themselves* ensure smooth functioning and proper leadership at the several different levels of service which are involved. This has become crystal clear, and we need not seek very far for the reasons.

For example: knowing that theirs is the final authority, the groups are sometimes tempted to instruct their Delegates exactly how to vote upon certain matters in the Conference. Because they hold the ultimate authority, there is no doubt that the A.A.

groups have the **tight to** do this. **If they** insist, they **can** give directives to their Delegates on any and all A.A. matters.

But good management seldom means the full exercise of a stated set of ultimate rights. For example, were the groups to carry their instruction of Delegates to extremes, then we would be proceeding on the false theory that group opinion in most world service matters would somehow be much superior to Conference opinion. Practically speaking, this could almost never be the case. There would be very few questions indeed that “instructed” Delegates could better settle than a Conference acting on the spot with full facts and debate to guide it. Of course it is understood that complete **reporting** of Conference actions is always desirable. So is full **consultation** with Committee Members and Group Representatives. Nevertheless the “instructed” Delegate **who cannot act on his own conscience** in a **final** Conference vote is not a “trusted servant” at all; he is just a messenger.

Now the Conference Charter does not actually solve typical problems like this. It is a broad document which can be variously construed. Under one interpretation, the groups can instruct the Delegates all they like. Under another, the Delegates and Trustees actually can ignore such instructions, whenever they believe that to be desirable. How, then, shall we practically understand and reconcile such a condition?

Let us look at two more illustrations: the Conference, as will be later demonstrated, is in a state of nearly complete practical authority over the Trustees, despite the legal rights of the Board. Suppose the Conference Delegates began to use this ultimate power of theirs unwisely? Suppose they began to issue hasty and flat directives to the Trustees on matters respecting which the Trustees would be far more knowledgeable than the Delegates? What then?

This same kind of confusing problem used to beset the relations between the Trustees and their wholly-owned active service corporations, entities which are nowadays partly directed by non-Trustee volunteers and paid service workers. But the Board of Trustees certainly does own these outfits. Therefore the Trustees can hire and fire; their authority is final. Yet if the Trustees were constantly to exert their really full and absolute authority, if they were to attempt to manage these operating entities **in detail**, then the volunteers and Staff members working in them would quickly become demoralized; they would be turned into buck-passers and rubber stamps; their choice would be to rebel and resign, or to submit and rot.

Therefore some traditional and practical principle has to be devised which at all levels **will continuously balance the right relation between ultimate authority and delegated responsibility**. How, then, are we going to accomplish this?

There are three possible attitudes that we might take toward such a state of affairs. We could, for instance, throw away all corporate charters, bylaws, job definitions, and the like. This would leave it entirely to each group of trusted servants to figure out what its authority and responsibility really is. But such an absence of any chartered structure would be absurd; nothing but anarchy could result.

Then of course we could take the opposite tack. Refusing to give our leadership any worthwhile discretion at all, we could add to our present Charters great numbers of rules, regulations, and bylaws that would attempt to cover every conceivable

action or contingency. That would be altogether too much red tape-more than we A.A.'s could stand.

The right A.A. solution for this problem is to be found, however, in the latter part of Tradition **Two**, which provides for “trusted servants.” This really means that we ought to trust our responsible leaders *to decide*, within the understood framework of their duties, *how they will interpret and apply their own authority and responsibility to each particular problem or situation as it arises*. This sort of leadership discretion should be the essence of “*The Right of Decision*,” and I am certain that we need not have the slightest fear of granting this indispensable privilege at nearly every level of world service.

There will always be plenty of ultimate authority to correct inefficiency, ineffectiveness, or abuse. If the Conference does not function well, the groups can send in better Delegates. If the Trustees get badly out of line, the Conference can censure them, or even reorganize them. If the Headquarters’ services go sour, the Trustees can elect better directors and hire better help. These remedies are ample and direct. But for so long as our world **services** function reasonably well — and there should always be charity for occasional mistakes — then “trust” must be our watchword, otherwise we shall wind up leaderless.

These are the reasons for my belief that we should forthwith invest in all of our service bodies and people a traditional “Right of Decision.” In our structure of world service this “Right of Decision” could be practically applied as follows:

- A. Excepting its Charter provisions to the contrary, the Conference always should be able to decide which matters it will fully dispose of on its own responsibility, and which questions it will refer to the A.A. groups (or more usually, to their Committee Members or **G.S.R.’s**) for opinion or for definite guidance.

Therefore it ought to be clearly understood and agreed that our Conference Delegates are *primarily the* world servants of A.A. as a whole, that only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective areas. Consequently they should, on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference *according to the best dictates of their own judgment and conscience at that time*.

- B. Similarly the Trustees of the General Service Board (operating of course within the provisions of their own Charter and Bylaws) should be able at all times to decide when they will act fully on their own responsibility and when they will ask the Conference for its guidance, its approval of a recommendation, or for its actual decision and direction.
- C. Within the scope of their definitely defined or normally implied responsibilities, all Headquarters service corporations, committees, staff or executives should also be possessed of the right to decide when they will act wholly on their own and when they will refer their problems to the next higher authority.

This “Right of Decision” should never be made an excuse for failure to render proper reports of all significant actions taken; it ought never be used as a reason for constantly exceeding a clearly defined authority, nor as an excuse for persistently

failing to consult those who are entitled to be consulted before an important decision or action is taken.

Our entire A.A. program rests squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust A.A., and we trust each other. Therefore we cannot do less than trust our leaders in service. The "Right of Decision" that we offer them is not only the practical means by which they may act and lead effectively, but it is also the symbol of our implicit confidence.

# CONCEPT IV

***Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional “Right of Participation,” taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.***

The principle of “Participation” has been carefully built into our Conference structure. The Conference Charter specifically provides that the Trustees, the Directors of our service corporations, (A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.) together with their respective executive staffs, shall always be voting members of the General Service Conference itself.

Exactly the same concept is borne in mind when our General Service Board elects the Directors of its wholly-owned active service corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. If it wished, the General Service Board could elect none but its own Trustees to these corporate directorships. But a powerful tradition has grown up to the effect that this never ought to be done.

For example, A.A. World Services, Inc. (which also includes the A.A. Publishing division) currently has seven directors, only two of whom are Trustees? The other five non-Trustee directors comprise three volunteers, both expert in office management and publishing, and two directors who are paid staff members: the general manager and his assistant. The general manager is traditionally the president of A.A. World Services, Inc. and his assistant is a vice president. For communication linkage, the editor or a staff member of the Grapevine or his nominee is invited to attend A.A. World Services, Inc. meetings.

Therefore the active management of A.A. World Services, Inc. and its publishing division is composed of Trustees whose mission is to see that these projects are properly managed; of volunteer experts who contribute their advice and professional experience; and of two paid office executives who are charged with getting most of the work done. It will be seen that each member of every classification, is a director, and so has a legal vote; that each corporate officer bears a title which, both practically and legally, denotes what his (or her) actual status and responsibility is.

Such a typical corporate business management easily permits a proper degree of voting “participation.” Every skilled element to do the allotted job is present. No class is set in absolute authority over another. This is the corporate or “participating” method of doing business, as distinguished from structures so common to many

institutional, military and governmental agencies wherein high-level people or classes of people often are set in absolute authority, one over the other.

We should also note that the **seven**<sup>2</sup> A.A. Grapevine directors are elected on the same principle as those of A.A. World Services, Inc. Here too we see Trustees, volunteer experts and paid staff members acting in concert as the active managers of that operation. And a world service nominee should be present at all **GV** meetings, both corporate and editorial.

The General Service Board, furthermore, rigorously abides by the principle of "Participation" whenever its chairman makes appointments to the Board's principal standing committees. Numbers of non-Trustees and paid staff workers are customarily chosen for these important posts. As with the active service corporations, the same elements are nearly always present in these committees, viz., representatives of the General Service Board, non-Trustee experts, and one or more staff members who must do most of the leg work. All can vote, and therefore all can truly "participate." When the time comes to ballot, there are no "superiors," no "inferiors," and no "advisers."

To this highly effective and unifying principle of "Participation" at all responsible levels, there is one regrettable but necessary exception. Members holding paid staff positions cannot become Trustees. This cannot be permitted because such a practice would interfere with the four-year rotation of the A.A. Trustees. And if ever the General Service Board had to be reorganized by the Conference, paid A.A. Trustees might prove to be a vested interest most difficult to dislodge.

Nevertheless our Trustees of today traditionally invite paid executives, staff members, accountants, and any others whose reports or advice may be required, to attend each quarterly meeting of the General Service Board. Thus the Trustees are put into direct communication with these workers who are thus made to feel that they are wanted and needed. Although they do not vote, these workers may freely participate in debate.

The preservation of the principle of "Participation" in our service structure is, to those of us who already understand its application and benefits, a matter of the highest importance to our future. Experience suggests, however, that some of each new generation of Delegates and Trustees will inevitably try to weaken, modify, or toss out the principle of "participation." Every year, a few Delegates will question the "right" of the corporate directors, **staffs**, and even of the Trustees to vote in Conference. New volunteer corporate directors will ask why any paid woman staff member should also be a director and thereby have a vote as good as their own. Every now and then a move will be made to abolish A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. It will be urged that these separate corporations ought to become "departments" or "committees" of the General Service Board, mainly managed by Trustees. To my view, it is so vital that we preserve this traditional "Bight of Participation" in the face of every tendency to whittle it down that we should here bring some of our pioneering experience to bear upon the problem.

In its early days the A.A. Headquarters was run on authoritarian and institutional lines. At that time the Trustees saw no reason to delegate their managerial powers

or to work in voting participation with any others outside their own body. The result was often grievous trouble and misunderstanding, and it was out of this rough going that the principle of "Participation" finally emerged. This lesson was learned the hard way, but it *was* learned.

We have seen how Dr. Bob and I had placed our Board of Trustees in full legal possession of all of our service assets. This had included our book literature, our funds, our public relations, and our A.A. General Service Office. This is how our early Trustees came to have all of the authority there was. But most of the actual responsibility for the conduct of A.A.'s Headquarters nevertheless fell on me, my assistant, and her staff. On the one hand we had Trustees who possessed complete authority, and on the other hand there were founders and office managers who had great responsibility but practically no authority. It was a kind of schizophrenia, and it caused real trouble.

It was natural for the Trustees, who had all of the authority and all of the money, to feel that theirs was the duty to directly manage the office and to actively superintend practically everything that was done. To accomplish this, two Trustee committees were formed, a policy and an administrative committee. We at the office had no membership on these committees and hence no real "participation." Of course I could go to Trustee meetings to persuade or advise, and the same was true of the committee meetings. But my assistant, who really carried the greater part of the office load, couldn't get inside a Trustees meeting, and she was called into committee meetings only to make suggestions and reports, answer questions, and receive orders. Sometimes these committees issued us conflicting directives.

The situation was complicated by yet another wheel in the management machine. Our publishing company (then Works Publishing, Inc.) was of course wholly owned by the Board of Trustees. Except in one important particular, Works Publishing, Inc. had, however, become a pure "dummy." It had nothing to do with the active management except to issue checks for office and publishing expenses. An old A.A. friend of mine, its Trustee-treasurer, signed those checks. Once, when he was a bit out of sorts, he tore up all of our paychecks because my assistant had issued them a couple of days early so that the gals in the back office could buy Easter bonnets. Bight then and there we began to wonder how much *absolute* authority over money and people any one of us drunks could handle. Also, how much of this type of coercion we alkies on the receiving end could sit and take. In any case it had become dead sure that our Headquarters could not be run by two executive committees and a dummy corporation, each able to issue point-blank nonparticipating directives.

The point may be made that nowadays we drunks can "dish it out" or "take it" better than we used to. Even so, I would sure hate to see us ever go back to a non-participating setup. Now that we have more service people involved and more money to handle, I am afraid the result would be much the same and maybe worse. There was really nothing exceptional about the incident of the tom-up checks. Every time an absolute authority is created, it always invites this same tendency toward **over-**domination respecting all things, great and small.

It was years before we saw that we could never put all authority in one group and

virtually all responsibility in another and then expect efficiency of operation, let alone real harmony. Of course, no one is against the idea of final authority. We are only against its misapplication or misuse. "Participation" can usually stop this sort of demoralizing nonsense before it starts.

Let us look at another aspect of this participation problem. The final authority for services must lie in the A.A. groups; but suppose the groups, sensing their great power, should try to over-exercise it by sending in Delegates irrevocably instructed as to how to vote on most questions. Would the Delegates feel that they were participants, trusted servants? No, they would feel like agents and order-takers.

The Delegates themselves, of course, could also give the Trustees this same treatment. The Delegates' power is so great that they could soon make the Trustees feel like rubber stamps, just as the Trustees unknowingly did to workers at Headquarters. If, therefore, the Conference ever begins to refuse the Trustees vote in it, and if the Trustees ever again refuse to let corporate service volunteers and staff members vote at the level of their own corporate and Conference work, we shall have thrown all past experience to the winds. The principle of allowing a proper voting participation would have to be painfully relearned.

One argument for taking away the Trustee and service worker vote in the Conference is this: it is urged that there is danger if we allow service people and Trustees to vote on their own past performance; for example, their annual reports. To a certain extent this argument is sound. As a matter of tradition, there is no doubt that Trustees and service workers alike should refrain from voting on reports on their own past activities.

But those who would *do away entirely* with the votes of Trustees and service workers in the Conference overlook the point that such reports of past performance constitute only a fraction of the business of that body. The Conference is far more concerned with policies, plans, and actions which are to take effect in the future. To take away the votes of Trustees and service workers on such questions would obviously be unwise. Why should our Conference be deprived of the votes of such knowledgeable people as these?\*

Perhaps someone will object that, on close votes in the Conference, the combined Trustees and service worker ballots may decide a particular question. But why not? Certainly our Trustees and service workers are no less conscientious, experienced, and wiser than the Delegates. Is there any good reason why their votes are undesirable? Clearly there is none. Hence we ought to be wary of any future tendency to deny either our Trustees or our service people their Conference votes, except in special situations that involve past performances, job qualifications, or money **compen-**

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\*There is another very practical reason for not giving Conference Delegates absolute voting authority over trustees, service directors, and staff members. It should be borne in mind that our delegates can never be like a Congress in constant session, having its own working committees, elected leaders, etc. Our delegates cannot possibly function in this manner for the simple reason that they meet for a few days only, once a year. Hence they cannot have an extensive firsthand acquaintance with many of the problems on which they are expected to vote. This is all the more reason for allowing the sometimes better-informed minority of trustees and Headquarters people the balloting privilege in all cases where no self-interest is involved.

pensation, or in case of a sweeping reorganization of the General Service Board itself, occasioned by malfunction of the Board. However, this should never be construed as a bar to Trustee vote on structural changes. It is also noteworthy that in actual practice our Trustees and Headquarters people have never yet voted in a "bloc." Their differences of opinion among themselves are nearly always as sharp and considerable as those to be found among the Delegates themselves.

There is another good reason for "participation," and this one has to do with our spiritual needs. All of us deeply desire to belong. We want an A.A. relation of brotherly partnership. It is our shining ideal that the "spiritual corporation" of A.A. should never include any members who are regarded as "second class." Deep down, I think this is what we have been struggling to achieve in our world service structure. Here is perhaps the principal reason why we should continue to ensure "participation" at every important level. Just as there are no second-class **A.A.'s**, neither should there be any second-class world service workers, either.

The "Right of Participation" is therefore a corrective of ultimate authority because it mitigates its harshness or misuse. It also encourages us who serve A.A. to accept the necessary disciplines that our several tasks require. We can do this when we are sure that we belong, when the fact of our "participation" assures us that we are truly the "trusted servants" described in **A.A.'s** Tradition Two.

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<sup>1</sup>Currently **A.A.W.S.** has nine directors, of which four are trustees.

<sup>2</sup>Currently ten.

# CONCEPT V

***Throughout our world service structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.***

In the light of the principle of the “Right of Appeal,” all minorities — whether in our staffs, committees, corporate boards, or among the Trustees — should be **encouraged** to file minority reports whenever they feel a majority to be in considerable error. And when a minority considers an issue to be such a grave one that a mistaken decision could seriously affect A.A. as a whole, it should then charge itself with the actual **duty** of presenting a minority report to the Conference.

In granting this traditional “Right of Appeal,” we recognize that minorities frequently can be right; that even when they are partly or wholly in error they still perform a most valuable service when, by asserting their “Right of Appeal,” they compel a thorough-going debate on important issues. The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an **uninformed**, misinformed, hasty or angry majority.

The traditional “Right of Appeal” should also permit any person in our service structure, whether paid or unpaid, to petition for the redress of a personal grievance, carrying his complaint, if he so desires, directly to the General Service Board. He or she should be able to do this without prejudice or fear of reprisal. Though in practice this will be a seldom exercised right, its very existence will always tend to restrain those in authority from unjust uses of their power. Surely our workers should cheerfully accept the necessary direction and disciplines that go with their jobs, but all of them should nevertheless feel that they need not silently endure unnecessary and unfair personal domination.

Concerning both “Appeal” and “Petition,” I am glad to say that in A.A.’s world services these valuable practices and rights have **always** been put to good use. Therefore I am committing them to writing only by way of helping to confirm and enlarge their future applications.

The **Rights of ‘Appeal’ and ‘Petition’** of course aim at the total problem of protecting and making the best possible use of minority feeling and opinion. This has always been, and still is, a central problem of all free governments and democratic societies. In Alcoholics Anonymous individual freedom is of enormous importance. For instance, any alcoholic is a member of A.A. the moment he says so; we cannot take away his right to belong. Neither can we force our members to believe anything or pay anything. Ours is indeed a large charter of minority privileges and liberties.

When we look at our world services, we find that here we have also gone to great lengths in our trust of minority groups. Under Tradition Two, the group conscience is the final authority for A.A. world service, and it will always remain so respecting all the larger issues that confront us. Nevertheless the A.A. groups have recognized that-for world service purposes the "group conscience of A.A." as **a totality** has certain limitations. It cannot act directly in many service matters, because it cannot be sufficiently informed about the problems in hand. It is also true that during a time of great disturbance the group conscience is not always the best possible guide because, temporarily, such an upset may prevent it from functioning efficiently or wisely. When, therefore, the group conscience cannot or should not act directly, **who does act for it?**

**The** second part of Tradition **Two** provides us with the answer when it describes A.A. leaders as "trusted servants." These servants must always be in readiness to do for the groups what the groups obviously cannot or should not do for themselves. Consequently the servants are bound to use their own information and judgment, sometimes to the point of disagreeing with uninformed or biased group opinion.

Thus it will be seen that in world service operations A.A. often trusts a small but truly qualified minority — the hundred-odd members of its General Service Conference — to act as **A.A.'s** group conscience in most of our service affairs. Like other free societies, we have to trust our servants, knowing that in the unusual event that they should fail their responsibilities, we shall still have ample opportunity to **recall** and replace them.

The foregoing observations illustrate, in a general way, **A.A.'s** concern for the freedom and protection of individual members and the whole membership's willingness to trust able and conscientious servants to function in their several capacities, for us all. As the longtime recipients of this kind of trust, I am sure that many of **A.A.'s** old-timers would like me to record their gratitude along with my own.

By 1951, when the General Service Conference was put into experimental operation, these attitudes of trust already were an essential part of A.A. life. In drafting the Charter for our Conference, therefore, we naturally infused that document with provisions which would insure protection and respect for minorities. This is exemplified, for instance, **in our** "Third Legacy" method of selecting Delegates. Unless the majority candidate can poll a two-thirds vote of his State or Provincial Assembly, he must place his name in a hat with one or more of the choices of the Assembly minority. By thus drawing lots, the minority candidates have an equal chance with the majority's choice.

Strictly speaking, a democracy operates on the will of the majority, no matter how slim that majority may be. So when making special concessions to the feelings and the often-demonstrated wisdom of minorities, we occasionally may deny democracy's cherished principle of final decision by a simple majority vote. Nevertheless we actually have found that our Third Legacy method of electing Delegates has much **strengthened the spirit** of democracy among us. Unity has been cemented, **cooperation** has been increased, and when the Delegate is finally chosen, no discontented minority can trail in his wake. To increase the actual **spirit of democracy** by special deference to minority opinion is, we think, better than to follow blindly the rule which

always insists on an unqualified dominance by a slight majority vote.

-Consider another example: our respect for the minority position, plus a desire for unity and certainty, often prompts A.A.'s General Service Conference to debate at length on important questions of policy, provided there is no need for an immediate or early decision. On many occasions the Conference has insisted on a continuing discussion even in certain cases when a two-thirds majority easily could have been obtained. Such a traditional voluntary practice is evidence of real prudence and courteous deference to minority views. Unless it has been absolutely unavoidable, the Conference has usually refused to take important decisions on anything less than a two-thirds vote.

This same kind of consideration for the minority position can be found in the Charter provision that no Conference vote can be considered binding on the Trustees of the General Service Board unless it equals two-thirds of a Conference quorum. This gives the Trustees a power of veto in cases where the majority is not great. By reason of this provision the Trustees, if they wish, can insist on further debate and so check any tendency to haste or emotionalism. In practice the Trustees seldom exercise this option. More often they go along with a simple majority of the Delegates, especially when prompt action on less critical matters is clearly needed. But the choice is always theirs whether to veto a simple majority or to act with it. Here again is a recognition of the constructive value of a trusted minority.

If to such a generous recognition of minority privileges we now add the traditional Rights of "Appeal" and "Petition," I believe we shall have granted to all minorities, whether of groups or of individuals, the means of discharging their world service duties confidently, harmoniously, and well.

More than a century ago a young French nobleman named De Toqueville came to America to look at the new Republic. Though many of his friends had lost their lives and fortunes in the French Revolution, De Toqueville was a worshipful admirer of democracy. His writings on government by the people and for the people are classics, never more carefully studied than at the present time.

Throughout his political speculation De Toqueville insisted that the greatest danger to democracy would always be the "tyranny" of apathetic, self-seeking, uninformed, or angry majorities. Only a truly dedicated citizenry, quite willing to protect and conserve minority rights and opinions, could, he thought, guarantee the existence of a free and democratic society. All around us in the world today we are witnessing the tyranny of majorities and the even worse tyranny of very small minorities invested with absolute power. De Toqueville would have neither, and we A.A.'s can heartily agree with him.

We believe that the spirit of democracy in our Fellowship and in our world service structure will always survive, despite the counter forces which will no doubt continue to beat upon us. Fortunately we are not obliged to maintain a government that enforces conformity by inflicting punishments. We need to maintain only a structure of service that holds aloft our Traditions, that forms and executes our policies thereunder, and so steadily carries our message to those who suffer.

Hence we believe that we shall never be subjected to the tyranny of either the majority or the minority, provided we **carefully** define the relations between them and forthwith tread the path of world service in the spirit of our **Twelve** Steps, our Twelve Traditions, and our Conference Charter — in which I trust that we shall one day inscribe these traditional Rights of “Appeal” and “Petition.”

# CONCEPT VI

***On behalf of A.A. as a whole, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.***

Just as the A.A. groups find themselves unable to act decisively respecting world service affairs unless they delegate a great amount of active authority and responsibility to their Conference, so must the Conference in turn delegate a liberal administrative authority to the General Service Board, in order that its Trustees may act freely and effectively in the absence of the Conference itself.

This critical need for Trustee liberty of action raises several important questions? Next to the Conference, A.A.'s Board of Trustees should be the most influential group of world servants that we have, and therefore we shall have to consider carefully the kind and degree of authority, responsibility, leadership, and legal status the Trustees must possess in order to function at top effectiveness over the years to come. We shall need to review and perhaps amend somewhat our present methods of choosing Trustees. We shall need to define clearly the several kinds of professional and financial skills that will always be required for a balanced trusteeship. Only by doing so can we permanently insure the Board's capability of future leadership.

In order to avoid continuous confusion, it will also be necessary to show precisely how the Trustees ought to be related to the Conference and just how they in turn should relate themselves to their active service corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. (including its division of A.A. Publishing) and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., our monthly magazine. In a general way these relations already are indicated in our Conference Charter, and to some extent they have been discussed on preceding pages. Nevertheless there still remains a real need to interpret and spell them out in detail. Of course there is no desire to freeze these relations into a rigid pattern. However

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\*See Concept VIII for a **definition** of the Trustees' powers and activities.

satisfactory and right our present arrangements seem, the future may reveal flaws that we do not yet envision. New conditions may require refinements or even considerable alterations. For this reason our service Charter is capable in most respects of being readily amended by the Conference itself.

It ought to be recalled, however, that all of our present arrangements, including the status of **A.A.'s** Trustees, are based on a great amount of experience, which it is the purpose of these writings to describe and make clear. When this is done, we shall not be hampered later on by such a lack of understanding that we could be tempted into hasty or unwise amendments. Even if we do someday make changes that happen to work out poorly, then the experience of the past will not have been lost. These articles can then be relied upon as a point of safe return.

Let us therefore make a more specific examination of the need of a wide latitude of administrative freedom for the Trustees of the General Service Board.

As we have seen, the Conference Charter (and also the Charter of the General Service Board, and its Bylaws) has already staked out a large area of freedom of action for our Trustees. And we have reinforced these Charter provisions by granting to all world service bodies, including of course our Trustees, the traditional Rights of "Decision," "Participation," and "Appeal." A careful review of these legal and traditional rights can leave little doubt what the actual administrative responsibilities of the Trustees are; nor can there be any question that their authority in this area is large indeed.

Why should our Trustees be given this very wide latitude of judgment and action? The answer is that we **A.A.'s** are holding them mainly responsible for all our service activities: A.A. World Services, Inc. (including A.A. Publishing) and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. These entities (as of 1960) have combined gross receipts approaching one-half million dollars annually! Our Trustees are also responsible for **A.A.'s** worldwide public relations. They are expected to lead in the formulation of A.A. policy and must see to its proper execution. They are the active guardians of our Twelve Traditions. The Trustees are **A.A.'s** bankers. They are entirely responsible for the investment and use of our substantial reserve funds. The very wide range of their activities will be still further seen under "Concept XI," wherein the work of their five<sup>2</sup> standing committees is described.

While the Trustees must always operate under the close observation, guidance and sometimes the direction of the Conference, it is nevertheless true that nobody but the Trustees and their wholly-owned service corporations could possibly pass judgment upon and handle the very large number of transactions now involved in our total world service operation. In view of this very large responsibility, they must therefore be given a correspondingly large grant of authority and leadership with which to discharge it. We should quite understand, too, that the conduct of our world services is primarily a matter of policy and business. Of course our objective is always a spiritual one, but this service aim can only be achieved by means of an effective business operation. Our Trustees must function almost exactly like the directors of any large business corporation. They must have ample authority to really manage and conduct **A.A.'s** business.

This is the basic corporate concept on which our structure of world service rests. We have deliberately chosen the corporate form rather than the institutional or governmental model, because it is well known that the corporation is a **far** superior vehicle when it comes to the administration of policy and business.

From top to bottom, our whole service structure indeed resembles that of a large corporation. The A.A. groups are the stockholders; the Delegates are their representatives or proxies at the “annual meeting”; our General Service Board Trustees are actually the directors of a “holding company.” And this holding company, the General Service Board, actually owns and controls the “subsidiaries” which carry on our active world services.

This very real analogy makes it even more clear that, just like any other board of directors, our Trustees must be given large powers if they are to effectively manage the principal world affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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<sup>1</sup>The 1987 receipts of A.A. World Services and the Grapevine are almost ten million.

\*There are now eleven standing committees.

# CONCEPT VII

***The Conference recognizes that the Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the A.A. purse for its final effectiveness.***

This concept may appear to be contradictory; it may look like the collision of an irresistible force with an immovable object. On the one hand we see a Board of Trustees which is invested with complete legal power over A.A.'s funds and services, while on the other hand we find that A.A.'s General Service Conference is clothed with such great traditional influence and financial power that, if necessary, it could overcome the legal rights of the Board of Trustees. It can therefore give the Trustees directives and secure compliance with them — practically speaking.

This means that the practical power of the Conference will nearly always be superior to the legal power of the Trustees. This superior power in the Conference flows from the powerful traditional influence of the Charter itself. It derives from the large majority of group-chosen Delegates in the Conference. And finally, in any great extremity, it would rest upon the undoubted ability of the Delegates to deny the General Service Board the monies with which to operate — viz., the voluntary contributions of the A.A. groups themselves. Theoretically, the Conference is an advisory body only, but practically speaking, it has all of the ultimate rights and powers that it may ever need.

When we reflect that our Trustees have no salaried financial interest in their posts, we can be quite sure that such a Board would never think of legally contesting the clear and sustained will of the Conference Delegates and the A.A. areas they represent. If **someday** the chips were really down, there would be little chance of a stalemate. The Conference would find itself in complete control of the situation. As the conscience of A.A., the Delegates would **find** themselves in ultimate authority over our General Service Board and also its corporate arms of active world service.

The history of this development is interesting and important. When in 1950 the Conference Charter was drawn, this question of where the final authority ought to rest was a very moot matter. Would the Conference have the last word, or would the Trustees? By then we knew for sure that complete and final authority over our

funds and services should never continue to reside in an isolated Board of Trustees who had an unqualified right to appoint their own successors. This would be to leave A.A. world services in the hands of a paternalistic group, something entirely contradictory to the “group conscience” concept of Tradition Two. If the Trustees were to be our permanent service administrators and the guardians of A.A.’s Twelve Traditions, it was evident that they must somehow be placed in a position where they would necessarily have to conform to our Traditions, and to the desires of our Fellowship.

To accomplish this objective, we considered all kinds of devices. We thought of incorporating the Conference itself, thus placing it in direct legal authority over the Board. This would have meant that all Conference members would have had to have a legal status. It would have been much too cumbersome an arrangement, involving really the incorporation of our whole Fellowship, an idea which the Conference itself later repudiated.

We also considered the idea of country-wide elections for all Trustees. But this procedure would have produced a political shambles, rather than the top flight managerial talent the Board had to have. So that notion was abandoned.

We next inquired whether the Conference itself could not both nominate and directly elect our Trustees. But how could several scores of Delegates do this? They would come from all over the country. They would not be too well acquainted with each other. Their terms would be short and their meetings brief. How, then, could such a body nominate and elect alcoholic and nonalcoholic Trustees of a top managerial caliber? Clearly there could be no reliable method for doing this. Very reluctantly, we had to drop the idea.

It thus became obvious that new Trustee choices — subject to Conference approval — would still have to be left pretty much to the Trustees themselves. Only they would be capable of understanding what the Board needed. Except in a time of reorganization, this method of selection would have to continue — certainly as to the larger part of the Board’s membership. Otherwise the Board could not be held accountable for management results. We might wind up with no effective management at all. For these reasons, the Conference was given the right to reject, but not to elect, new Trustee candidates.’

It was out of these considerations that our present Conference Charter was developed, a structure which clearly gives the Conference a final and ultimate authority but which nevertheless legally preserves the right of the Trustees to function freely and adequately, just as any business board of directors must. This arrangement is in strict conformity with the “trusted servant” provision of Tradition Two, which contemplates that our servants, within the scope of their duties, should be trusted to use their own experience and judgment. Trusted servants at all A.A. levels are expected to exercise leadership, and leadership is not simply a matter of submissive housekeeping. Of course leadership cannot function if it is constantly subjected to a barrage of harrasing directives.

Up to the present time our experience shows that this balance of powers between the Trustees and the Conference is thoroughly workable. We have taken great pains to reserve final authority to the Conference by practical and traditional means. By

legal means we have delegated ample functional and discretionary authority to the Trustees. We believe this balance can be maintained indefinitely, because the one is protected by tradition and the other by law.

Now we come to another interesting question often raised by new General Service Board Trustees. They say, "We Trustees have certain rights and duties which are legally established by our Charter. Are we not violating this Charter when we accept a Conference opinion or directive? We should have a **perfect** legal right to say 'no' to anything and everything that the Conference wants."

Our Trustees certainly do have this absolute legal authority, but there is nothing in their Charter that **compels** them to use **all** of their authority **all** of the time. They are quite at liberty to accept advice or even direction from anyone at all. They can simply refrain from using their absolute legal right to say "no" when it would be much wiser, all things considered, to say "yes." Just as the Conference should avoid the overuse of its traditional authority, so should the Trustees avoid overuse of their legal rights. The President of the U.S., for example, has an absolute legal right to veto congressional legislation. Yet ninety-nine percent of the time he does not do it, because (a) he likes a piece of legislation or (b) he does not like the legislation but believes a veto would nevertheless be unwise or impossible of success. Whether or not he will exercise his veto is determined by circumstances. It is just like that with A.A.'s Board of Trustees.

Clearly, then, our Board of Trustees does reserve a veto power over any Conference action; this is legally necessary and right in principle, even though the veto will seldom be used. At certain times, however, the Trustees' veto could be of important and constructive use.

Here, for instance, are three typical examples in which it would be the duty of the Trustees to veto Conference action:

1. If, in a time of haste or heavy stress, the Conference should take an action or issue a directive to the Trustees in clear violation of its own Charter, or that of the General Service Board; or if the Conference were to pass any measure so ill-considered or so reckless as to seriously injure, in the judgment of the Trustees, A.A.'s public relations or A.A. as a whole, it would then be the duty of the Trustees to ask for a Conference reconsideration. In event of a Conference refusal to reconsider, the Trustees could then use their legal right to veto. And, if desirable, they could appeal the issue directly to the A.A. groups themselves.
2. Although traditionally the Trustees never should substantially exceed a Conference-approved budget without consulting the Conference, they **should feel entirely free to reduce the Conference budget figure** during any fiscal year, even though such an action might curtail or cancel special plans or projects initiated and directed by the Conference itself.
3. If, by reason of unforeseen conditions, any particular plan, project, or directive of the Conference should become impractical or unworkable during a fiscal year, the Trustees should, without prejudice, be able to use their right of veto and cancellation.

If, therefore, in the years ahead, the Conference will always bear in mind the actual rights, duties, responsibilities, and legal status of the General Service Board, and if the Trustees in their deliberations will constantly realize that the Conference is the real seat of ultimate service authority, we may be sure that neither will be seriously tempted to make a “rubber stamp” out of the other. We may expect that in this way grave issues will always be resolved and harmonious cooperation will be the general rule.

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<sup>1</sup>**Trustee elections** are now held during Conference week for regional and at-large trustees; to that extent the Conference now chooses trustees according to the procedure described in the “Service Manual.”

# CONCEPT VIII

***The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.***

Since our Trustees bear the primary responsibility for the good conduct of all our world service affairs, this discussion deals with the basic concepts and methods by which they can best discharge their heavy obligations. Long experience has now proved that our Board as a whole must devote itself almost exclusively to the larger and more serious questions of policy, finance, group relations, public relations and leadership that constantly confront it. In these **more critical matters, the** Board must of course function with great care and deliberation. Here the Board is expected skillfully to **plan, manage, and execute.**

It follows, therefore, that the close attention of the Board to such large problems must not be subject to constant distraction and interference. Our Trustees, as a body, cannot be burdened with a mass of lesser matters; they must not concern themselves with the endless questions and difficulties which arise daily, weekly, and monthly in the routine conduct of the World Service Office and of our publishing enterprises. In these areas the Board cannot possibly manage and conduct in detail; it must delegate its executive function.

Here the Board's attitude has to be that of custodial oversight; it cannot be the executive. Hence the Trustees are the guarantors of the good management of A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. They discharge their custodial obligation by electing the directors of these services, a part of whom must always be Trustees. By this means, the executive direction of these functions is securely lodged in the active service corporations themselves rather than in the General Service Board. Each corporate service entity should possess its own character, its own working capital, its own executive, its own employees, its own offices and equipment. Except to mediate difficult situations and to see that the service corporations operate within their budgets and within the general framework of A.A. and Headquarters policy, the Board will

seldom need to do more, so **far** as routine service operations are concerned.

This arrangement is in line with modern corporate business practice. The General Service Board is in effect a holding company, charged with the custodial oversight of its wholly-owned and separately incorporated subsidiaries, of which each has, for operating purposes, a separate management. We have demonstrated to our satisfaction that this corporate basis of operation is superior to any other.

This lesson, as we have observed before, has been learned the hard way. When discussing "Participation" in Concept IV, we saw that earlier attempts to manage the A.A. General Service Office and A.A. Publishing Company through a multiplicity of Trustee committees did not work well. These were really efforts to make our services into departments of the old Alcoholic Foundation (now the General Service Board). It was found difficult to define the powers of these several Trustee service committees respecting each other and respecting the work at hand. Responsibility and authority rarely could be kept in balance. Point-blank directives, rather than participating decisions, were the rule. In these committees nobody held titles that fully denoted what individual responsibilities actually were; and, naturally enough, those who handled money and signed checks assumed the greater authority. The control of money, therefore, too often determined A.A. policy, regardless of the views of the workers and volunteers at the office who sometimes understood these matters better.

But the moment we consolidated our service office function into a single and permanent corporate structure wherein officers and directors had legally defined titles and duties and responsibilities — the moment such a corporation was provided with its own working capital, employees, and facilities -- the moment its directors could legally vote in proportion to their actual responsibilities — the moment we were able in this way to define clearly executive authority — from that moment we began to see great improvement. More harmonious and effective conduct of our business has been the result ever since.

We finally learned what the business world well knows: that we could not, at the level of top management, run a large, active and full-fledged business entity with loose-jointed committees and departments. For example, how could our Trustees **function** today if they were to become a mere "committee" or "department" of the General Conference instead of the legally chartered and carefully defined body that they necessarily are?

Neither can our General Service Board be made into an operating corporation. Any corporation conducting a large and active business always must have a single executive head who is familiar with every department, who is actually on the job most of the time, and who therefore can directly coordinate the several departments and mediate their differences. This would mean (if we tried it) that the General Service Board "divisions" would have to report to the General Service Board Chairman, as their chief executive. But unless he was **an executive in fact**, and constantly available to them, how could they do so? In the very nature of our particular setup, our Board Chairman can never be such an executive. He is usually a nonalcoholic and could not give the required time. Nor, as a Trustee, could he be paid a salary

for the work that would be required of him as the top executive of all our services.

Suppose, however, that the Trustees engaged a full-time manager who would actively conduct all three of our service enterprises as departments of the Board. An immediate difficulty would be that such a person could never be a Trustee and could therefore never act as the Chairman of the General Service Board. He would therefore have no real status. He would become a man of all work under the absentee direction of the Board Chairman. Consider, too, the fact that half of our Board of Trustees normally live out of **town**<sup>1</sup> and the further fact that we cannot well ask our nonalcoholic Trustees to give the active services close and continuous supervision. Altogether, these are weighty reasons why we should never turn the General Service Board into an operating corporation.

Nor would we be much better off if we formed one big subsidiary service corporation, wholly-owned by the General Service Board and designed to encompass under a single top executive all of our active services, including The A.A. Grapevine. This plan would also create executive difficulties, because it would over-concentrate executive authority. And **finally**, an individual executive having the many diverse talents required would be hard to find and hard to replace.

A further consideration is that we have always rigorously avoided any great money or executive concentration by placing our reserve funds with the Trustees and by dividing our total working capital between the A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., each entity having its separate executive. There is **always** a powerful connection between money and authority. Whenever we concentrate money, we shall inevitably create the temptation for the exercise of too much executive authority, an undesirable condition for us. Therefore we should strenuously avoid placing too much money or too much authority in any one service entity. These are potent reasons for maintaining separate incorporations for each of our active services.

However, experience dating from our earliest days strongly suggests that future Trustees and service workers, in the supposed interests of accounting simplicity, tax savings, and hoped-for efficiency, will be periodically tempted to go in for concentrations and consolidations of one kind or another. Should this be again attempted, we know that the risk of making an administrative shambles out of the total operation will be great indeed.

These observations are not intended to bar any future needful change. It is urged only that we avoid unnecessary repetitions of those painful experiences and mistakes of the past which sometimes resulted from too much concentration of money and authority. It can only be left on the record that we still see no workable way to convert the Board of Trustees into an active, "all-purpose" service corporation.

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<sup>1</sup>In 1988, about eighty percent of the **trustees** live "out of town."

# CONCEPT IX

***Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of A.A. must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.***

No matter how carefully we design our service structure of principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating results of our structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who must man it and make it work. Good leadership cannot function well in a poorly designed structure. But weak leadership can hardly function at all, even in the best of structures. But once we have created a basically sound structure, that job is finished, except for occasional refinements.

With *leadership* we shall have a continuous problem. Good leadership can be here today and gone tomorrow. Furnishing our service structure with able and willing workers has to be a continuous activity. It is therefore a problem that in its very nature cannot be permanently solved. We must continuously find the right people for our many service tasks. Since our future effectiveness must thus depend upon ever-new generations of leaders, it seems desirable that we now proceed to define what a good service leader should be; that we carefully indicate in each level of service, especially in our Board of Trustees, what special skills will always be required; and that we review our present methods of finding and choosing that leadership.

First let's remember that the base for our service structure rests on the dedication and ability of several thousand General Service Representatives (**G.S.R.'s**), several hundred area Committee Members, and nearly a hundred Delegates. These are the direct agents of the A.A. groups; these are the indispensable linkage between our Fellowship and its world service; these are the primary representatives of A.A.'s group conscience. Without their support and activity we could not operate permanently at all.

When making their choices of **G.S.R.'s**, the A.A. groups should therefore have such facts well in mind. It ought to be remembered *that it is only the G.S.R.'s* who, in Group Assembly meetings (or in caucus) can name Committee Members and finally name the Delegates. Hence great care needs to be taken by the groups as they choose these Representatives. Hit-or-miss methods should be avoided. Groups who name no **G.S.R.'s** should be encouraged to do so. In this area a degree of weakness tends to persist. The needed improvement seems to be a matter of increased care, responsibility, and education.

As the **G.S.R.'s** meet in their Assemblies to name Delegates, an even greater degree of care and dedication will be required. Personal ambitions will have to be cast aside, feuds and controversy forgotten. "Who are the best qualified people that we can name?" **This should be the** thought of **all**.

Thus far our Third Legacy method of naming Delegates by a two-thirds vote or by lot has proved highly satisfactory. This system of choosing has greatly reduced political friction; it has made each Delegate feel that he or she is truly a world servant rather than just the winner of a contest. In Committee Members and Delegates alike, our Third Legacy methods have generally produced people of a high level of dedication and competence. In this area of service we are in good shape. Our Area Assemblies need only to continue to act with care and in selfless good spirit.

It should be reported that some members still doubt whether choice by lot is ever a good idea. They say that the best man does not always win. In answer it must be pointed out that each time we have abandoned the "two-thirds vote or lot" in naming Delegates, there has been a sense of defeat and disturbance in the minority camp which is nowhere nearly offset by the advantage of naming the supposedly best man. Indeed the second-best man can often be as good a Delegate as the Assembly's first choice; he may even be a better Delegate.

We now come to the principal theme of this particular Concept: How can we best strengthen the composition and leadership of the future Board of Trustees, the Board which in years to come will have to exercise **A.A.'s** primary leadership in world service administration, the trusteeship which will in fact have to assume most of my former duties and responsibilities in connection with **A.A.'s** world services?

As previously noted, the actual transference of authority and responsibility from me to the Trustees has been going on for a long time. I am still around and still serving as an adviser, and I have also been finishing a few remaining chores (for example, the development of these Concepts) which were left over from the 1955 St. Louis Convention. But the time approaches when I shall have to withdraw from nearly all world service activity. This is why I feel a great interest now in doing everything possible to strengthen the administrative composition and **A.A.** leadership of our General Service Board, so that future Trustees may be better able to cope with the problems and dangers which time will no doubt bring.

My admiration for what **A.A.'s** alcoholic and nonalcoholic Trustees have done for us all is boundless. During the time of our infancy and adolescence, nothing could have been structurally better than the setup we have had. Looking at this record, many **A.A.'s** naturally feel that what was good for the past will surely be good for the future; that any change in the induction methods, in the Trustee ratio of alcoholics to nonalcoholics, or in the present composition of our Board will prove dangerous rather than beneficial.

But change has been pressing upon us right along, and it is still doing so. For example, our Board operated in all the years between 1938 and 1951 without the support of a Conference. But it was **finally** and reluctantly realized that this relatively unseen and unknown Board could not continue without a permanent linkage to **A.A.**, something that Dr. Bob and I could not give it forever. We did not like to face this

change, but we had to. The trusteeship had to be securely anchored to A.A. or it eventually would have collapsed. The Conference simply had to come into being.

This change profoundly altered the position of the Trustees. Their former authority was modified; they were firmly linked to A.A. and were thus made directly accountable to our Fellowship. Nobody today questions the wisdom of that momentous change, because everybody can now see that it has provided an essential protection for the service effectiveness and security of A.A.'s future. Experience has refuted the idea that changes which are needed to meet altered conditions are necessarily unwise.

We now stand on the edge of still another great change. Though we have already solved the problem of the Trustees' authority, their responsibility, and their linkage to A.A., *we have by no means solved, in my belief, the question of the Board's future role in service leadership.* Hence it is my deep conviction that the administrative and A. A. leadership strength of the Board should be considerably increased; that these and other improvements can place it in a much better position, practically and psychologically; that such changes are truly necessary to meet the conditions which will be certain to follow when my own world service leadership has been terminated.

Students of history recognize that the transference of the original leadership of a society to its successors in leadership is always a critical turning point. This difficult question of leadership, this problem of transference, must now be faced.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let us finally consider what specific personal qualities a world service leader ought to have. For whatever use it may be to future generations of our trusted servants, I here offer a discussion on this subject published in a 1959 issue of "The A.A. Grapevine."

## **LEADERSHIP IN A.A.: EVER A VITAL NEED**

No society can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and A.A. can be no exception. It must be said, though, that we A.A.'s sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without much personal leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of "principles before personalities" around to such a point that there would be no "personality" in leadership whatever. This would imply rather faceless automatons trying to please everybody, regardless.

At other times we are quite as apt to demand that A.A.'s leaders must necessarily be people of the most sterling judgment, morals, and inspirations; big doers, prime examples of all, and practically infallible.

Real leadership, of course, has to function in between these entirely imaginary poles of hoped-for excellence. In A.A. certainly no leader is faceless, and neither is any leader perfect. Fortunately our Society is blessed with any amount of real leadership — the active people of today and the potential leaders of tomorrow as each new

generation of able members swarms in. We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision, and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We have only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: "Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example." In effect we are saying to them, "Act for us, but don't boss us."

A leader in A.A. service is therefore a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgment of his own — well, he really isn't a leader at all.

Good leadership originates plans, policies, and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can, obtain sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided of course that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

A "politico" is an individual who is forever trying to "get the people what they want." A statesman is an individual who can carefully discriminate when and **when not to** do this. He recognizes that even large majorities, when badly disturbed or uninformed, can, once in a while, be dead wrong. When such an occasional situation arises, and something very vital is at stake, it is always the duty of leadership, even when in a small minority, to take a stand **against the storm, using its every** ability of authority and persuasion to effect a change.

Nothing, however, can be more fatal to leadership than opposition for opposition's sake. It never can be "Let's have it our way or no way at all." This sort of opposition is often powered by a visionless pride or a gripe that makes us want to block something or somebody. Then there is the opposition that casts its vote saying, "No, we don't like it." No real reasons are ever given. This won't do. When called upon, leadership must always give its reasons, and good ones.

Then, too, a leader must realize that even very prideful or angry people can sometimes be dead right, when the calm and the more humble are quite mistaken.

These points are practical illustrations of the kinds of careful discrimination and soul-searching that true leadership must always try to exercise.

Another qualification for leadership is "give and take," the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us "all-or-nothing" drunks. Nevertheless we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized **by a series of improving compromises.** We cannot, however, compromise

always. Now and then it is truly necessary to stick flat-footed to one's conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are situations for keen timing and careful discrimination as to which course to take.

Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics; our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship.

Then there are those whom we like to call our "destructive" critics. They **power-drive**, they are "**politickers**," they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumors, gossip, and general scuttle-butt to gain their ends — all for the good of A.A., of course! But in A.A. we have at last learned that these folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending very much on how we relate ourselves to them.

To begin with, we ought to listen carefully to what they say. Sometimes they are telling the whole truth; at other times, a little truth. More often, though, they are just rationalizing themselves into nonsense. If we are within range, the whole truth, the half truth, or no truth at all can prove equally unpleasant to us. That is why we have to listen so carefully. If they have got the whole truth, or even a little truth, then we had better thank them and get on with our respective inventories, admitting we were wrong. If it is nonsense, we can ignore it. Or we can lay all the cards on the table and try to persuade them. Failing this, we can be sorry they are too sick to listen, and we can try to forget the whole business. There are few better means of self-survey and of developing genuine patience, than the work-outs these usually well-meaning but erratic brother members afford us. This is always a large order and we shall sometimes fail to make good on it ourselves. But we must keep trying.

Now we come to the all-important attribute of *vision*. Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future. Some might feel this sort of striving to be a sort of heresy, because we **A.A.'s** are constantly telling ourselves, "One day at a time." But that valuable principle really refers to our mental and emotional lives and means chiefly that we are not foolishly to repine over the past nor wishfully to day-dream about the future.

As individuals and as a fellowship, we shall surely suffer if we cast the whole job of planning for tomorrow onto a fatuous idea of Providence. God's real Providence has endowed us human beings with a considerable capacity for foresight, and He evidently expects us to use it. **Therefore** we must distinguish between wishful fantasy about a happy tomorrow and the present use of our powers of thoughtful estimate. This can spell the difference between future progress and unforeseen woe.

Vision is therefore the very essence of prudence, an essential virtue if ever there was one. Of course we shall often miscalculate the future in whole or in part, but that is better than to refuse to think at all.

The making of estimates has several aspects. We look at past and present experience to see what we think it means. From this we derive a tentative idea or policy. Looking first at the nearby future, we ask how our idea or policy might work. Then we

ask how our policies or ideas might apply under the several differing conditions that could arise in the longer future. If an idea looks like a good bet, we try it on — experimentally when that is possible. Later we revalue the situation and ask whether our estimate is working out.

At about this stage we may have to take a critical decision. Maybe we have a policy or plan that still looks **fine** and is apparently doing well. Nevertheless we ought to ponder carefully what its longtime effect will be. Will today's nearby advantages boomerang into large liabilities for tomorrow? The temptation will almost always be to seize the nearby benefits and quite forget about the harmful precedents or consequences that we may be setting in motion.

These are no fancy theories. We have found that we must use these principles of estimate constantly, especially at world service levels where the stakes are high. In public relations, for example, we must estimate the reaction both of A.A. groups and the general public, both short-term and long-term. The same thing goes for our literature. Our finances have to be estimated and budgeted. We must think about our service needs as they relate to general economic conditions, group capability, and willingness to contribute. On many such problems often we must try to think months and years ahead.

As a matter of fact, all of A.A.'s Twelve Traditions were at first questions of estimate and vision for the future. Years ago for example we slowly evolved an idea about A.A. being self-supporting. There had been trouble here and there about outside gifts. Then still more trouble developed. Consequently we began to devise a policy of "no outside gifts." We began to suspect that large sums of this kind would tend to make us irresponsible and could divert us from our primary aim. Finally we saw that for the long pull, outside money could really ruin us. At this point, what had been just an idea or general policy crystallized firmly into an **A.A.** tradition. We saw that we must sacrifice the quick, nearby advantage for long-term safety.

We went through this same process on anonymity. A few public breaks had looked good. But finally the vision came that many such breaks eventually could raise havoc among us. So it went: first a tentative idea, then an experimental policy, then a firm policy, and finally a deep conviction — a vision for tomorrow.

Such is our process of estimating the future, and responsible world leadership must be proficient in this vital activity. It is an essential ability, especially in our Trustees. Most of them, in my view, should be chosen on the basis that they have already demonstrated an aptness for foresight in their own business or professional careers.

We shall be in continual need of these same attributes — tolerance, responsibility, flexibility, and vision — among our leaders of A.A. services at all levels. The principles of leadership will be the same whatever the size of the operation.

Maybe this seems like an attempt to stake out a specially privileged and superior type of A.A. member. But it really is not so. We simply are recognizing that our talents vary greatly. The conductor of an orchestra is not necessarily good at **finance** or foresight. And it is quite unlikely that a fine banker could be a great musical performer. So when we talk about A.A. leadership, we only declare that we ought to select that leadership on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can **find**.

While this article was first thought of in connection with our world service leadership, it is possible that some of its suggestions can be useful to anyone who takes an active part in our Society.

This is true particularly in the area of Twelfth Step work, in which nearly all of us are actively engaged. Every sponsor is a leader. The stakes are about as big as they could be. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole **family** hang in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example — these qualities of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death.

We thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in all of its affairs.

# CONCEPT X

***Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority--the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and bylaws.***

Nearly all societies and governments of today exhibit serious deviations from the very sound principle that **each operational responsibility** must be accompanied by **a corresponding authority** to discharge it.

This is why we have been at such pains in preceding discussions to define the several authorities and responsibilities of the A.A. groups, the Conference, the Trustees, and our active service corporations. We have tried to make sure that authority in each of these levels is equal to responsibility. Then we have tried to relate these levels one to another in such a way that this principle is maintained throughout.

An outstanding characteristic of every good operational structure is that it guarantees harmonious and effective function by relating its several parts and people in such a way that none can doubt what their respective responsibilities and corresponding authorities actually are. Unless these attributes are well defined; unless those holding the final authority are able and willing properly to delegate and maintain a suitable operational authority; unless those holding such delegated authority feel able and willing to use their delegated authority freely as trusted servants; and unless there exists some definite means of interpreting and deciding doubtful situations-then personal clashes, confusion, and ineffectiveness will be inevitable.

The matter of responsibility and its necessary and co-equal authority is of such urgent importance that we might profitably recapitulate what has already been said, meanwhile taking a **bird's-eye-view** of our entire structure to better envision how this principle does, and always must, apply in our every activity and attitude.

The first characteristic that any working structure must have is a point, or succession of points, where there is ultimate responsibility and therefore an ultimate authority. We have already seen how, for A.A.'s world services, this kind of final responsibility and authority resides in the A.A. groups themselves. And they in turn have apportioned some of their ultimate authority to the Conference and the Trustees.

We have observed how the Conference Delegates, directly representing the groups, are actually in a position of ultimate authority over the Trustees. We have seen further how the Trustees are in ultimate authority over the General Service Board's wholly-owned service corporations-A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Likewise we know that the directors of these corporations are in ultimate authority over their officers who, on their part, are in like authority over their staffs.

The principle of ultimate authority runs clear through our structure. This is necessary, because all of our service affairs and activities have to head up *somewhere* for final responsibility. Ultimate authority is also needed so that each worker or each classification of servants knows where and who the final boss is.

If however, ultimate authority is not carefully qualified by delegated authority, we then have the reverse result. Were there no delegated authority, the groups would be directing their Delegates on every important vote, the Delegates would similarly turn the Trustees into a timid committee which would receive point-blank direction on just about everything; the Trustees would then install themselves as the sole directors of the service entities and would commence to run them by directives. The corporate executives would become small czars, pushing the working staffs about. In short, such a misuse of ultimate authority would add up to a dictatorship wherein nearly every classification of A.A. servants would have large responsibilities but no real or certain authority, and hence no capability of effective decision and leadership with which to operate. Big or little tyrannies and buck-passing would be the inevitable penalties.

Therefore it becomes clear that ultimate authority is something which cannot be used indiscriminately. Indeed ultimate authority should practically never be used in full, *except in an emergency* That *emergency usually arises* when delegated authority has gone wrong, when it must be reorganized because it is ineffective, or because it constantly exceeds its defined scope and purpose. For example, if the groups are dissatisfied with the Conference, they can elect better Delegates or withhold funds. If the Delegates must, they can censure or reorganize the Trustees. The Trustees can do the same with the service corporations. If a corporation does not approve of the operations of its executives or staff, any or all of them can be fired.

These are the *proper* uses of *ultimate authority*, because they rightly discharge a truly ultimate responsibility. The *influence* of ultimate authority must always be felt, but it is perfectly clear that *when delegated authority is operating well it should not be constantly interfered with*. Otherwise those charged with operating responsibility will be demoralized because their authority to do their work will be subject to arbitrary invasion, and because their actual responsibility will be made greater than their real authority.

How have we *structurally tried* to restrain the natural human tendency of those in ultimate authority to usurp and take over the needed operational or delegated authority? Well, this has been a large order, and several structural devices have been required. Let us review them, noting how they apply.

In our structure we have tried to create at each level accurate definitions of authority and responsibility. We have done this (a) by legal means, (b) by traditional means, and (c) by principles under which doubtful and seemingly or really conflicting situations can be interpreted and readily resolved.

**Take** the Conference Charter. It is not a legal instrument, but practically speaking it is the substance of a contract between the A.A. groups and their Conference. The Charter makes clear in a general way that the A.A. groups have delegated some of their ultimate authority and all needed operational authority to the Conference, which

includes the Trustees and the active services. It is further suggested, in these present articles, that each Conference member on a final vote be entitled to cast his ballot according to the dictates of his own conscience; that the Conference itself also be granted, under the traditional "Right of Decision," the privilege of choosing which matters it will decide by itself and which it will refer back to the groups for their discussion, guidance or direction. These are the traditional definitions which can check the natural tendency of the groups to over-instruct Delegates. This gives the Conference an authority equal to its real responsibility.

Consider next the position of the Trustees. In previous articles we have made it clear that although the Conference has the ultimate authority, the Trustees at most times must insist on their legal rights to actively administer our service affairs. Their legal rights has been further strengthened and its use encouraged by the traditional "Right of Decision." In these articles we also recognize that the Trustees have a legal right of "veto" over the Conference when, in rare cases, they feel this should be used. By these means we have guaranteed the Trustees an administrative authority equal to their actual responsibility. This has of course been done without denying in any way the ultimate authority of the Conference, or of the Delegates, should it really be necessary to give the Trustees directives or censures, or to reorganize the Board. It should also be noticed that the position of the Trustees is still further strengthened by their "voting participation" in the Conference and by the recognition that they are **A.A.'s** primary world service administrators.

Much care has also been taken to guarantee the Directors of A.A. World Services, Inc. and the A.A. Grapevine, Inc. an ample operating authority that fully matches their responsibility for the routine conduct of our active services. The Charter provisions of their corporations legally protect their rights; the tradition that the Trustees must elect **non-Trustee** experts to these boards strengthens them further. Besides, the traditional "Right of Decision" adds still more substance to their position. In these Concepts the perils of turning the General Service Board back into a "departmentalized" operating corporation have also been emphasized.

These are the extraordinary precautions we have taken to maintain the operating authority and integrity of the active services themselves. These safeguards are necessary because the General Service Board owns these corporations. Therefore the authority of the Trustees over them is not only ultimate, it is absolute the moment the Trustees want to make it that way. They can elect new boards of directors at any time; they control the corporate budget; they can withhold operating funds. All these powers are needed and right. Nevertheless, so long as things go well, it is highly important that the Trustees do not unnecessarily interfere with, or usurp the operating authority of these entities. Hence the care we have taken in constructing these definitions of delegated authority.

To a considerable degree, the standing committees of the General Service **Board—**Policy, Finance, Public Relations, and the like—have a similar latitude. Under the principle of the "Right of Decision," each primary committee may choose what business it will dispose of on its own and what matters it will refer to the Board. The position of these committees is also fortified by the appointment of a generous

proportion of non-Trustee members. Here, too, we try to make the authority of these committees equal to their responsibility!

Now we come to the matter of conflicting authorities and to the question of how these conflicts are to be resolved. Most routine conflicts in the active services are easily settled, because we have provided ready communication between all service corporations and the committees of the General Service Board. For example: at every meeting of The Grapevine Boards or staff, a representative of A.A. World Services, Inc. is present, and vice versa. The General Policy Committee always contains one or more members of the Finance and Budgetary Committees, and vice versa. Such interlocking provides easy communication. Each entity knows what the other is doing. This practical arrangement irons out many conflicts of authority-but not all.

Suppose, for example, that the framing and execution of an important A.A. policy is involved. In such a case the General Policy Committee naturally assumes the primary jurisdiction, taking on the job of planning and of making recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Let us suppose, however, that a considerable sum of money will be needed. In such a case, the plan also will have to be placed before the Finance and Budgetary Committee. If this committee agrees that the expenditure is warranted and is in line with the over-all budget, it tells the **Policy** Committee to go ahead and make its recommendation to the Trustees. But if the Finance and Budgetary Committee objects, then it must file its objection with the Trustees, who will settle the issue. Or if they think it necessary, the Trustees will refer the matter to the Conference.

The principle of a primary and a secondary jurisdiction also works the other way round. If the Finance Committee, for example, proposes a large expenditure that may strongly affect A.A. feeling and policy, it must be sure to check with the Policy Committee, even though the main jurisdiction still lies with the Budget and Finance people.

In all matters of joint or conflicting authority, therefore, a senior jurisdiction must be established. The junior jurisdiction must be heard and, regardless of the question involved, there must be an understood point or body where a **final** settlement can be had. It is understood that lesser conflicts are not to be loaded upon the Trustees for final decision. But it should always be clear where the **point of final decision** is **located**.

A condition to be avoided at all costs is **double-headed** business or policy management. Authority can never be divided into equal halves. Nowhere does such split authority or double-headed management so bedevil a structure as in its executive departments. The vital need of avoiding double-headed executive management will be fully discussed under Concept XI.

In addition to the methods we use to make delegated authority equal to delegated responsibility, we have two more guarantees-the "Right of Appeal" and the "Right of Petition." As we know, a bare majority is apt to constitute itself as a pseudo-ultimate authority on many occasions when it should not do so. Likewise, executives are apt to over-boss their assistants. Therefore we use the concepts of appeal and petition to insure that every minority, and every worker doing a job, has an authority and a status commensurate with the responsibility involved.

To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to reorganize; but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and discharge their clear responsibilities.

All of this is fully implied in **A.A.'s** Tradition Two. Here we see the “group conscience” as the *ultimate* authority and the “trusted servant” as the *delegated* authority. One cannot function without the other. We well know that only by means of careful definitions and mutual respect can we constantly maintain a right and harmonious working balance.

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<sup>1</sup>In the years since Bill wrote on the General Policy Committee (see also p. 52), its functions have changed markedly. Now known as the General Sharing Session, it meets three times a year for about two hours on the Sunday preceding the General Service Board meeting, and considers the long-range plans of board committees and other topics of special interest. Its membership comprises all the trustees, the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine directors and staffs, and the appointed members of the board committees.

# CONCEPT XI

***While the Trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.***

The longtime success of our General Service Board will rest not only on the capabilities of the Trustees themselves; it will depend quite as much upon the competent leadership and harmonious association of those non-Trustee committee members, corporate service directors, executives, and staff members who must actively carry on A.A.'s world services. Their quality and dedication, or their lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service. Our **final** dependency on them will always be great indeed.

Far more than most of the Trustees, these servants will be in direct contact with A.A. world-wide, and their performance will be constantly on view. They will perform most of the routine labor. They will carry on most of our services. They will travel widely and will receive most visitors at the Headquarters. They will often originate new plans and policies. Some of them will eventually become Trustees. Because this group will form the visible image of world service, most A.A.'s will measure our service values by what they see and feel in them. Members of this group will not only **support the** world leadership of the Trustees; in the nature of the case they will be bound to share world leadership with them.

Fortunately we already have a sound internal structure of service in which a very competent group of non-Trustee servants are now working. Only a few refinements and changes will still be needed in A.A. World Services, Inc. and at The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., the latter being a comparatively recent comer to our service scene. The main outlines of this underlying structure are now defined, and the effectiveness

of this arrangement has been well proven. Of what, then, does our underlying structure of service consist?

It is composed of the following elements: the **five**<sup>1</sup> standing committees of the General Service Board, plus our two active service corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. (including its A.A. publishing division) and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Let's have a look at each of these operations.

The standing committees of the General Service Board are Nominating, Finance and Budgetary, Public Information, Literature, and General Policy — the titles clearly denoting the direct administrative responsibilities of the General Service Board. These committees are appointed yearly by the General Service Board Chairman, and each committee, as we have seen, includes a suitable proportion of Trustees, non-Trustee experts in the work to be done, a Headquarters executive, and a staff worker.

**The Nominating Committee:** *This committee* aids the Trustees in discharging their prime obligation to see that all vacancies — whether within their own ranks or among key service directors, executives, staff members — are properly filled with members and workers of the greatest possible competence, stability, and industry.

The recommendations of this committee to a large extent will determine the continuous success of our services. Its members will have the primary voice in choosing our future Trustees and non-Trustee workers. Careful deliberation, painstaking investigation and interviewing, refusal to accept casual recommendations, preparation well in advance of lists of suitable candidates — these will need to be the principal attitudes and activities of this committee. All temptation to haste or snap judgment will need to be **faithfully** and constantly resisted.

Another problem that future committees may have to face is the subtle tendency toward deterioration in the caliber of personnel due to the very natural and usually unconscious tendency of those who suggest nominees to select individuals of somewhat less ability than themselves. Instinctively we look for associates rather like ourselves, only a little less experienced and able. For example, what executive is likely to recommend an assistant who is a great deal more competent than he is? What group of staff members will suggest a new associate whose capabilities are a great deal above their own average? The reverse is the more likely. Government bureaus, institutions, and many commercial enterprises suffer this insidious deterioration. We have not yet experienced it to any extent, but let us be sure that we never do. All of us need to be on guard against this ruinous trend, especially the Nominating Committee, whose first and last duty is to choose only the best obtainable for each vacant post.

**The Finance and Budgetary Committee:** *The* main responsibility of this body is to see that we do not become money-crippled or go broke. This is the place where money and spirituality **do** have to mix, and in just the right proportion. Here we need hardheaded members with much financial experience. **All** should be realists, and a pessimist or two can be useful. The whole temper of today's world is to spend more than it has, or may ever have. Many of us consequently

are infected with this rosy philosophy. When a new and promising A.A. service project moves into sight, we are apt to cry, "Never mind the money, let's get at it." This is when our budgeteers are expected to say, "Stop, look and listen." This is the exact point where the "savers" come into a constructive and healthy collision with the "spenders." The primary function of this committee, therefore, is to see that our Headquarters operation is always solvent and that it stays that way, in good times and bad.

This committee must conservatively estimate each year's income. It needs to develop plans for increasing our revenues. It will keep a cold and watchful eye on needless cost, waste, and duplication. It will closely scrutinize the yearly budgets of estimated income and expense submitted by A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. It will recommend amendments of the estimates when necessary. At mid-year it will ask for budget revisions if earlier estimates have gone too much wrong. It will scrutinize every new and considerable expenditure, asking "Is this necessary or desirable now? Can we afford it, all considered?"

This committee, in good times, will insist that we continue to set aside substantial sums to our Reserve Fund. It will pursue an investment policy in that fund which will guarantee the immediate availability of at least two-thirds of it at any time, without loss, thereby enabling us to meet hard times or even a calamity.

This is not to say that our Finance and Budgetary Committee constantly says "no" and fearfully hoards our money. I can remember an earlier day when we were so intent on building up the Reserve Fund out of book earnings that we let the office services run down badly for sheer lack of enough help to cope with our fast growth. Confidence was thereby lost out in the groups, and contributions suffered severely; they dropped by tens of thousands a year. By the time the office had been reorganized and confidence restored, we had used all our current book earnings and a large part of our Reserve Funds besides. This sort of **false** and unimaginative economy can prove very costly — in spirit, in service, and in money.

Future committees, therefore, will ponder the difference between real prudence (which is neither fear nor hoarding and which may indeed require us sometimes to run temporary deficits) and that kind of persistent recklessness which could someday result in the severe contraction or collapse of our vital services.

The safe course will usually lie midway between reckless budget-slashing and imprudent spending.

***The Public Information Committee:*** This one, too, is of top importance. Of course most of its members should be experts in the field of public relations. But emphasis should also be laid on the fact that sheer commercial expertness will not be quite enough. Because of **A.A.'s** traditional conservatism, reflected in the maxim "Attraction rather than promotion," it is evident that the professional members of the committee should be capable of adapting their business experience to **A.A.'s** needs. For instance, the techniques used to sell a big time

personality or a new hair lotion would not be for A.A. The committee should always include a certain number of **A.A.'s** who, because of long experience, really do have "A.A. sense," that is, a thorough grasp of our total picture and what it needs public relations-wise.

At the same time let us not overlook the need for high professional skill. Dealing with the huge complex of public communications as it exists today is not a job wholly for amateurs. Skill in this area implies much technical experience, diplomacy, a sense of what is dangerous and what is not, the courage to take calculated risks, and a readiness to make wise but tradition-abiding compromises. These are the skilled talents we shall always need.

We are trying our best to reach more of those 25 million alcoholics who today inhabit the world. We have to reach them directly and indirectly. In order to accomplish this it will be necessary that understanding of A.A. and public good will towards A.A. go on growing everywhere. We need to be on even better terms with medicine, religion, employers, governments, courts, prisons, mental hospitals, and all those conducting enterprises in the alcohol field. We need the increasing good will of editors, writers, television and radio **channels**. These publicity outlets — local, national, and international — should be opened wider and wider, always foregoing, however, high pressure promotion tactics. It is to, and through, all these resources that we must try to carry **A.A.'s** message to those who suffer alcoholism and its consequences.

This accounts for the importance in which we hold the work and the recommendations of our Public Information Committee. It is a critical assignment; a single large public blunder could cost many lives and much suffering because it would turn new prospects away. Conversely, every real public relations success brings alcoholics in our direction.

**The Literature Committee: This body** is charged with the revision of existing books and pamphlets; also with the creation of fresh pamphlet material to meet new needs or changing conditions. Broadly speaking, its mission is to see that an adequate and comprehensive view of A.A. in its every aspect is held up in writing to our members, friends, and to the world at large. Our literature is a principal means by which A.A. recovery, unity, and service are facilitated. Tons of books and pamphlets are shipped each year. The influence of this material is incalculable. To keep our literature fully abreast of our progress is therefore an urgent and vital work.

The Literature Committee constantly will have to solve new problems of design, format, and content. Here our policy is to aim at only the best; we firmly believe that cheap looking, cheap selling, and poorly conceived literature is not in **A.A.'s** best interest from any standpoint, whether effectiveness, economy, or any other.

Like other General Service Board Committees, this one must be expert in the work to be done. A key figure in its operation will necessarily be a paid writer and consultant. The creative work — that is, the initial form and draft and the final development of new undertakings — will be for this specialist

to make. The role of the other committeemen will be of constructive criticism and amendment of the consultant's effort. Here, too, we should remember that the committee must certainly include persons of wide A.A. experience. This matter of getting the "A.A. feel" into all our writings is absolutely vital. What we say so well **by** word of mouth we must also communicate in print.

The Literature Committee consequently will find it desirable to test carefully each new creation by asking a number of **A.A.'s** who are sensitive to A.A. feeling and reaction to offer their criticism and suggestions. **If** the new material is to affect the nonalcoholic world, especially the fields of medicine and religion, a consultation should be held with those nonalcoholic Trustees or other qualified friends who are knowledgeable in these areas.

**The General Policy Committee:** Perhaps this is the most important of all of the General Service Board Committees, and it is regarded as the senior one. It can take jurisdiction of practically all problems or projects which involve A.A. policy, public information, or A.A. Traditions that may arise in the other committees or service corporations?

Several years ago it became evident that the mass of business coming before the quarterly Trustees' meetings had become too big to handle. We therefore had to devise a committee that could filter all these matters, disposing of the lesser and fully examining the larger. The object **was** to break the jam at Trustees' meetings and to present the Board with carefully discussed recommendations, including minority reports, on the more serious issues. Thus the attention of the General Service Board could be accurately focused on what it really had to do. This committee, with ample time at its disposal, could also strengthen our process of planning and policy formation. It could avert blunders, both large and small, due to haste.

This was our original concept, and it has worked wonderfully well. Because this committee is designed to be super-sensitive to A.A. opinion and reaction, its hard core is composed of (a) the "out-of-town" A.A. Trustees, one of whom is traditionally named chairman, **(b)** two staff members of the World Service Office, (c) the president of the A.A. World Services, Inc., who is also general manager of the World Office, (d) the president of The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., who is the editor, and (e) those Trustees and service directors known to be long experienced with our Fellowship.

All other Trustees, committee members and directors and **staffs** are invited to attend meetings — the Trustees because they can thus get a preview of the questions that will confront them at their own meeting to follow — the committeemen and directors because in this way they will get a comprehensive picture of what other Headquarters units have been doing.

This is a large **committee, and** it operates "town **meeting-style,**" requiring four to six hours each Sunday afternoon preceding the Monday quarterly meeting of the General Service Board. A carefully worked out agenda is **always** prepared. The committee issues to the Trustees a full report of its recommendations, together with any minority views. Its report also shows the actual disposition

of minor matters.

This General Policy Committee has greatly strengthened our Headquarters unity. All participants get the feeling they are "on the team." The size of the meeting is no obstacle. Many minds, plenty of time, and real sensitivity to A.A. insure a remarkable effectiveness of policy and planning.

Again it is emphasized that none of these five General Service Board Committees are executive in character. They do not manage and conduct the active affairs of the service corporations. They may, however, make any recommendations they wish — to the service corporations themselves or to the Trustees. It will be noted that the General **Policy** Committee always examines the quarterly reports of the corporate services and such reports of the other General Service Board Committees as may be available at meeting time. The committee can and does comment upon these reports and makes recommendations respecting them.

Next to be considered will be our active service corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Their activities probably represent **nine**-tenths of our direct Headquarters effort.

The General Service Board owns the stock of these entities? Therefore the Trustees yearly elect all of their directors, seven (at present) in each corporation. This means that so far as the routine direction of our established services is concerned, the Trustees have fully delegated their executive function in these constantly active service areas.

The directorate of A.A. World Services, Inc. (including the A.A. Publishing Division) is traditionally composed of two Trustees for custodial oversight, three **non**-Trustee experts in the work to be done, and two executives, the general manager of the World Office and one of his staff assistants, who are president and vice president respectively. The two Trustee directors usually have seen past service on the Board as non-Trustee experts, and one of them is customarily named Treasurer. A.A. directors thus are those thoroughly experienced with these operations?

The Grapevine situation is similarly structured, with two exceptions. The two Trustee directors of the Grapevine are (1) an ex-editor of the Grapevine, and (2) a finance man who has previously served on the Grapevine Board. The latter Trustee traditionally is made its chairman, and he presides at corporate meetings. This is because neither the editor, who is traditionally the Grapevine president, nor his staff member director, the vice president, ordinarily will have the needed business experience to chair the Grapevine corporate board. This arrangement also places the chairman in a **favorable** position to mediate differences that may arise between the editorial and business departments of the enterprise. The Grapevine also has an Editorial Board which names its own successors, subject to the approval of the corporate Board?

The Editorial Board assists the editor and his **staff in** determining the editorial policy, slant and content of the magazine. It relieves the editor (up to now, a volunteer) of some of his work load. It surveys and makes recommendations respecting Grapevine promotional material going to the groups. It gives our makeup men, artists and writers both status and coherence in their joint efforts. And it is a training ground for future editors. Our Editorial Board therefore is the chief guarantor of the magazine's quality

and editorial continuity.

Every new generation of workers will raise certain questions about these two corporate questions: "Why can't both of them be consolidated into the General Service Board?" Or, "Why can't the Grapevine be merged into A.A. World Services, Inc., thus placing all active Headquarters operations under a single management?" These questions have already been discussed under previous Concepts. We have concluded that the General Service Board is an unsuitable vehicle for an operating corporation; that because the Grapevine is such a dissimilar operation, and because we ought not concentrate too much money and executive authority in a single entity, there should be no merger of A.A. World Services and The A.A. Grapevine. Upon these points we seem well agreed — at least, as of now.

But this question has some other variations. It will often be asked, "If it is desirable to separately incorporate dissimilar enterprises, why then shouldn't the A.A. Publishing division of A.A. World Services be separately incorporated and managed by a board of directors specially skilled in book and booklet publishing?" Offhand, this looks logical.

Today, however, A.A. Publishing is mostly a business operation. Unlike a commercial publisher, we do not have to ensure the selection, writing, and publication of a lot of new books each year. Most of our A.A. books are already written, and it is probable that not many more will be published. Of course we shall issue new pamphlets now and then, and revisions of older material occasionally are desirable. But this relatively small amount of creative publishing work can be handled easily by the Literature Committee. Hence the operation of the A.A. publishing division of A.A. World Services, Inc., is now mostly a matter of printing, distribution, accounting, and finance. For management purposes there is therefore no present need for a separate corporation; it is only required that the books of A.A. World Services, Inc. show a separate accounting for its A.A. Publishing division. Only in the highly unlikely event of a large and protracted entry into the new book business would we really ever need a separate corporate management.

Another question will be this: "Why don't we merge A.A. Publishing with The A.A. Grapevine, so placing all of our literature under a unified management?" The answer here is based on the complete dissimilarity of the two enterprises. The Grapevine has to produce a brand new quality product every month, on the dot. By contrast, A.A. Publishing success largely depends upon what has already been written.

In the Grapevine the paramount activity is therefore the creative. The Grapevine requires several paid staff members and the constant aid of a large number of specialized volunteers without whose help it could not operate. Why, then, should we load up these people with a lot more straight business activity? Obviously we should not.

Another question often is posed, "Why should A.A. World Services, Inc. not take over **all the** Grapevine's accounting, finances, promotion, and distribution. Would not such a consolidation of financing, employees, and routine business be more **efficient** and economical? Would not this relieve the Grapevine of all business headaches?"

This plan, too, looks reasonable at first glance. Nevertheless the chances are it

would work poorly. It has serious structural defects. It would violate the basic **good-**management principle that whoever has the responsibility for a given task must also have the needed authority, funds, personnel, and equipment to carry it out. The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. unquestionably holds full responsibility for its own solvency, promotion, policy, and the management of its circulation. It is supposed to have four business directors, expert in these phases of magazine operation. The Conference and the General Service Board will always hold them accountable. If, therefore, any large part of the Grapevine business functions are transferred to a completely different corporate management over which the Grapevine has no authority, what then? **This** certainly would be double-headed management **and** a source of continuous conflict. The Grapevine Board would become virtually impotent.

Such a situation also would tend to demoralize the editor, his staff, and the Editorial Board, all of them specialized volunteers. This group now has a representation of three directors on the Grapevine Board. In such a corporate body it is now possible to reconcile the editorial desire for excellence in the magazine with the financial realities of the Grapevine situation. But if the business function of the Grapevine was transferred to A.A. World Services, Inc., the status and influence of the **GV** editorial **people** would be reduced **to almost** nothing. World Service directors would be mostly interested in business efficiency and solvency, while the **GV** editorial representatives would still be looking for quality and magazine improvements. There would be no practical way of reconciling these differences. The business directors of A.A. World Services, Inc. would dominate the editorial workers and therefore the editorial policy. The editorial group would find that they had become a mere committee, taking directions from A.A. World Services. "Who pays the piper calls the tune" would become the actual working arrangement. Having so split the management of the Grapevine in halves and having abandoned the principle of "Participation," it is doubtful if we could make this setup work at all, especially with all those volunteers. We might save some money, but we probably could not save the magazine.

Joint arrangements between The A.A. Grapevine and A.A. World Services for routine operations such as billing, mailing, etc., are not necessarily precluded, though to a lesser degree the same kind of frictions above described can be expected to develop unless there is the clearest possible understanding of "who controls what and when."

We who now work at **A.A.'s** Headquarters are pretty much in agreement on the foregoing operations. They are recorded in some detail for whatever future benefits they may be. We deeply realize that we should be on guard always against structural tinkering just for money-saving purposes. These departures can often result in so much disharmony and consequent inefficiency that nothing is really saved, and there **can** often be a real loss.

A detailed description of the active operational side of our General Service Board Committees and active service corporations is too lengthy to set down here. But we should take note, however, of several more principles and problems which are **com-**mon to both A.A. World Services, Inc. and to The A.A. Grapevine.

1. ***The status of executives — executive direction and policy formation distinguished:***  
No active service can function well unless it has sustained and competent

executive direction. This must always head up in *one person*, supported by such assistants as he needs. A board or a committee can never actively manage anything, in the continuous executive sense. This function has to be delegated to a single person. That person has to have ample freedom and authority to do his job, and he should not be interfered with so long as his work is done well.

Real executive ability cannot be plucked from any bush; it is rare and hard to come by. A special combination of qualities is required. The executive must inspire by energy and example, thereby securing willing cooperation. If that cooperation is not forthcoming, he must know when real **firmness** is in order. He must act without favor or partiality. He must comprehend and execute large affairs, while not neglecting the smaller. He often must take the initiative in plan making.

The use of such executive abilities implies certain realizations on the part of the executive and those who work with him, otherwise there is apt to be misunderstanding. Because of their natural drive and energy, executives will sometimes **fail** to distinguish between routine execution of established plans and policies, and the **making** of **new** ones. In this area they may tend to make new plans and put them into operation without sufficiently consulting those whose work is to be affected, or those whose experience and wisdom is actually or officially needed.

A good executive is necessarily a good salesman. But he often wants the **fast** sell and quick results on those very occasions where patient consultation with many people is in order. However, this is far better than timid delay and constant requests to be told by somebody or other what to do. The executive who overdrives can be reasonably restrained by the structural situation, and definitions within which he has to work. But a weak and wobbly executive is of little use at any time.

It is the duty of the good executive, therefore, **to learn discrimination** of when he should act on his own and when limited or wide consultation is proper, and when he should ask for specific definitions and directions: This discrimination is really up to him. His privilege of making these choices is structurally guaranteed by the "Right of Decision." He can always be censured **after his** acts, but seldom before.

In our world services we still have two more important executive problems. One is the lack of money to hire full-time top executives for A.A. World Services, Inc. and for the A.A. Grapevine. In our World Services Office, we can now afford only a part-time general manager. In the Grapevine we must rely on a **volunteer**.<sup>6</sup> Of course each of these executives has paid staff assistants. But the fact that one of our top executives can only give half his time and the other one considerably less is by no means an ideal situation.

A chief-executive-in-fact should be constantly on the job, and ours cannot be. Someday we may be able to correct this defect. Even then, however, we should not make the mistake of hiring full-time executives who, lacking the necessary experience and caliber, are willing to work cheaply. No more expensive blunder

than this could possibly be made. Outstanding ability in a volunteer, or a **part-timer**, is definitely preferable to that.

The second executive **difficulty** is inherent in our A.A. situation. Our key people at Headquarters are A.A. members; they have to be. Therefore the executives and their staffs are friends in A.A., members of the same club. This sometimes makes it hard for an executive to give firm guidance and equally hard for his A.A. friends to accept it. Our A.A. executives find that they not only have to run a business; they must also keep their friends. In turn, those working under them have to realize seriously that we really do have a business to conduct as well as a cooperative spiritual enterprise to foster. Therefore a reasonable amount of discipline and direction is a necessity. Those who cannot or will not see this are not well suited for Headquarters work. Although excessive **apartness** or roughshod authority is to be rejected in an executive, nobody should complain if he is both friendly and firm. These problems are not insoluble; we do solve them right along, mostly by the application of A.A. principles.

Problems of this sort occasionally crop up, but General Service Headquarters is not constantly beset with them. Because of the exceptional dedication of our people, a degree of harmony and effectiveness prevails that is unusual in the conduct of an outside business.

**2. Paid workers, how compensated:** We believe that each paid executive, staff member, or consultant should be recompensed in reasonable relation to the value of his or her similar services or abilities in the commercial world.

This policy is often misunderstood. Many **A.A.'s** no doubt regard A.A. world services as a sort of necessary charity that has to be paid for. It is forgotten that our particular charity is just as beneficial to us as it is to the newcomer; that many of those services are designed for the general welfare and protection of us all. We are not like rich benefactors who would aid the sick and the poor. We are helping others in order to help ourselves.

Another mistaken idea is that our paid workers should labor cheaply, just as charity workers often do elsewhere. If adopted, this concept would mark our service workers for unusual financial sacrifices, sacrifices that we would ask no other **A.A.'s** to make. We **A.A.'s** would be saying to each worker, "We send Headquarters \$3.00 apiece every year. But it would be just great if you would work for A.A. at \$2,000 a year less than you would be worth elsewhere." Seen in this light, the low-pay theory appears as absurd as it really is, especially when we remember that **A.A.'s** world service overhead is about the smallest per capita of any large society on earth. The difference between fair and poor pay at World Headquarters is a matter only of a few cents a year to each of us.

We should also consider the well-known fact that cheap help is apt to feel insecure and be inefficient. It is very costly in the long run. This is neither good spirituality nor good business. Assuming that service money is readily available, we should therefore compensate our workers well.

**3. Rotation among paid staff workers:** At **A.A.'s** World Office, most staff members' assignments are changed yearly. When engaged, each staff member is expected

to possess the general ability to do, or learn how to do, any job in the place — excepting for office management where, because of the special skills involved, rotation may sometimes be limited to part of the A.A. **staff**.<sup>7</sup> But the basis of compensating all staff members is identical. Pay increases are based on time served **only**.<sup>8</sup>

In the business world, such an arrangement would be unworkable. It would practically guarantee indifference and mediocrity, because the usual money and prestige incentives would be lacking. In our entire operating situation, this is the sole major departure from the structure of corporate business. Consequently there should be proved and compelling reasons for such a corporate heresy, and there are.

Our primary reason for the adoption of rotation and equal staff pay was the security and continuity of the office. We once had the conventional system of one highly paid staff member with assistants at much lower pay. Hers had been the principal voice in hiring them. Quite unconsciously, I'm certain, she engaged people who she felt would not be competitive with her. Meanwhile she kept a tight rein on all the important business of the place. A prodigy of wonderful work was done. But suddenly she collapsed, and shortly afterwards one of her assistants did the same. We were left with only one partly trained assistant who knew anything whatever about the total operation.

Luckily a good A.A. friend of mine, a fine organizer, pitched in and helped to put the office in order. We saw that we had to install a paid staff that simply couldn't break down. Next time there might be no one around to give the necessary amount of time for its reorganization. Besides this breakdown had cost us much confidence out in the field — so much so that we must have lost \$50,000 in three years of group contributions.

Thereafter we installed the principle of rotation in a considerably larger staff. Since then we have experienced sudden departures and collapses of A.A. staff members, each of which would have demoralized the place under the former conventional system. But since the remaining **staff** members always knew every assignment there was, no trouble at all was experienced. Under such a condition replacements can be carefully chosen and trained at leisure. And the usual tendency to select less able associates is largely overcome.

By thus putting our staff members on a complete parity, the removal of the usual money and prestige incentives did not really damage us at all. We **A.A.'s** had what the commercial venture often lacks: a dedicated desire to serve which replaced the usual ego drives. At the same time many of the temptations to destructive competition and office "politicking" were also removed. The spirit of Headquarters improved immeasurably and found its way out into the Fellowship.

In the future — at those times when the rotation system does not work perfectly — there will be the natural demand to throw it out in the supposed interest of efficiency. Certainly our successors will be at liberty to try, but past experience surely suggests that they may be jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

One more aspect of rotation: the matter of time. We already know that the

more responsible the assignment, the longer the term of service must be, if we are to have effectiveness. For example, a group secretary can be changed every six months and an Intergroup committeeman every year. But to be of any use whatever, a Delegate has to serve two years, and a Trustee must serve four.

In the World Service **Office**, we have found it impractical and unfair to set any fixed term of employment. A staff member has to have several years training. Are we then to throw her out, just as she is getting top grade? And if she realized that she could only serve for a fixed period, could we have hired her in the first place? Probably not. These posts are hard to fill because they require just the right ingredients of personality, ability, stability, business and A.A. experience. If we insisted on a fixed term of service, we would often be forced to engage **A.A.'s** really not qualified. This would be both harmful and **unfair**.

But we need not fear too many staff members' getting "old in the service." The emotional pace of "A.A. around the clock" is too strenuous for most of **them** to take for a very long period of time. Already they come and go for this and for other personal reasons. Within reason, most of them can and must rotate from assignment to assignment. But we should attempt no more rotation than this.

Because of certain unusual skills required, rotation among Grapevine staff members is more difficult. If the magazine ever gets a **part-time** editor who can insist on and help in their training, we may someday bring this about. But in the Grapevine there will never be safety in numbers, as in the World Office. The present Grapevine paid staff of two could serve a circulation of many times today's size.

- 4. Full "Participation" of paid workers is highly important:** We have already discussed the necessity of giving key paid personnel a voting representation on our committees and corporate boards? We have seen that they should enjoy a status suitable to their responsibility, just as our volunteers do. But full participation for paid workers cannot be established by voting rights only. Other special factors usually affect the extent of their participation. Let's see what these are, and what can be done about them.

The first is the **fact** of employment for money — the employer-employee relation. In human affairs, authority and money are deeply linked. Possession or control of money spells control of people. Unwisely used, as it often is, this control can result in a very unhappy kind of division. This ranges the "haves" on one side of the fence and the "have nots" on the other. There can be no reconciliation or harmony until a part of that fence is taken down. Only then can proper authority join hands with a responsible willingness to get on with the job.

In our A.A. structure of service we therefore must do more than give our paid workers a place at the A.A. council table. We ought to treat them in all respects as we would volunteers, people who are our friends and co-workers. So long as they work well, the fact that they are dependent upon the money they receive should never, consciously or unconsciously, be used as a lever against them. They must be made to feel that they are on the team. If, however, they cannot

or will not do their jobs, that is something else again. We can and should let them go.

Women workers present still another problem. Our Headquarters is pretty much a man's world. Some men are apt to feel, unconsciously, that they are women's superiors, thus producing a reflex reaction in the gals. Then, too, some of us — of both sexes — have been emotionally damaged in the area of man-woman **relations**. Our drinking has made us wrongly dependent on our marriage partners. We have turned them into our "moms" and "pops," and then we have deeply resented that situation. Perhaps maladjustment has taken still other turns which leave us with a hangover of hostility that we are apt to project into any **man-woman** relatedness that we undertake.

It is possible for these forces to defeat the good working partnerships we would like to have. But if we are fully aware of these tendencies, they can be the more easily overcome, and forgiven. We can be aware also that any sound working relation between adult men and women must be in the character of a partnership, a noncompetitive one in which each partner complements the other. It is not a question of superiority or inferiority at all. Men, for example, because they are men, are apt to be better at business. But suppose we replaced our six women staff members with six men? In these positions, could the men possibly relate themselves so uniquely and so effectively to our Fellowship as the women? Of course not. The women can handle this assignment far better, just because they are **women**.<sup>10</sup>

Such are the realizations which we can all use every day of our working lives. Add to these the further thought that no organization structure can fully guarantee our Headquarters against the depredations of clashing personalities, that only the sustained willingness to practice spiritual principles in all our affairs can accomplish this, and we shall never need to have any fear for our future harmony.

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<sup>1</sup>In the years since this was written, seven other specialized committees have been added: Cooperation With the Professional Community, General Service Conference, Archives, International Convention/Regional Forums, Correctional Facilities, Treatment Facilities and International.

<sup>2</sup>The Policy Committee is now known as the General Sharing Session, and its makeup and functions have changed, as explained on p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Both A. A. World Services, Inc., and The A. A. Grapevine, Inc. are now **membership corporations**; their members are the trustees.

<sup>4</sup>The directorate of A.A. World Services, Inc. is now composed of: the G.S.O. general manager, who is the president of A. A.W.S. ; a G.S.O. staff member, who is a vice-president; two regional trustees; two general service trustees; three nontrustee directors. Its rotating chairperson is a trustee.

<sup>5</sup>Today A.A. Grapevine, Inc., has ten directors. The Corporate Board is publisher of the magazine; the chief operating officer is president. Two members of the board are general service trustees; **two are** regional trustees; one is a nonalcoholic trustee; five are nontrustee directors. Production and management of the Grapevine are given over to a full-time paid staff. **Two** staff members are members of the Corporate Board.

<sup>6</sup>Today there is a full-time editorial staff of two people and a part-time art director.

<sup>7</sup>Most staff members serve two years on each assignment.

<sup>8</sup>Since 1987, pay increases are based on merit.

<sup>9</sup>G.S.O. staff members have voting representation on trustees' committees. Additionally, the staff member serving as staff coordinator has a vote as a director of the A.A.W.S. Board.

<sup>10</sup>The restrictions no longer apply. In 1988, eight women and three men serve as G.S.O. staff members.

# CONCEPT XII

***General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others: that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.***

The Concept here considered consists of Article 12 of the Conference Charter. There are good reasons for placing it in this context.

Taken as a whole, our Conference Charter is the substance of an informal agreement which was made between the A.A. groups and their Trustees in 1955. It is the agreed basis upon which the General Service Conference operates. In part, the Charter is an elastic document; its first eleven Articles can be readily amended by the Conference itself at any time.

But Article 12 of the Charter stands in a class by itself. An amendment or a cancellation of any of its vital Warranties would require the written consent of three-quarters of all the directory-listed A.A. groups who would actually vote on any such proposals, and the considerable time of six months is allowed for careful deliberation. Although changes in the Warranties of Article 12 thus have been made difficult, they have not been made impossible.

It is clear that all of these Warranties have a high and permanent importance to A.A.'s general welfare. This is why we believe we should permit change in them

only upon positive evidence of their defectiveness and then only by common consent of the A.A. groups themselves. We have ranked them therefore with A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, feeling that they are quite as important to A.A.'s world services as the Traditions are to A. A. as a whole.

The Warranties of Article 12 are a series of solemn undertakings which guarantee that the Conference itself will conform to A.A.'s Twelve Traditions; that the Conference can never become the seat of great wealth or government; that its fiscal policy shall ever be prudent; that it will never create any absolute authority; that the principle of substantial unanimity will be observed; that it will never take any punitive action; that it never will incite public controversy; that it can serve A.A. only; and that it shall always remain democratic in spirit. These Warranties indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality which our General Service Conference should always possess. Barring any unforeseen defects, these are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves.

There are significant aspects of these Warranties which should be considered. Notice, for example, that all of them are counsels of prudence — prudence in personal relatedness, prudence in money matters, and prudence in our relations with the world about us. For us, prudence is a workable middle ground, a channel of clear sailing between the obstacles of fear on the one side and of recklessness on the other. Prudence in practice creates a definite climate, the only climate in which harmony, effectiveness, and consistent spiritual progress can be achieved. The Warranties of Article 12 express the wisdom of taking forethought for the future based on the lessons of the past. They are the sum of our protection against needless errors and against our very natural human temptations to wealth, prestige, power, and the like.

Article 12 opens with this general statement: "In all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition.. ." Of all bodies and groups in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Conference should above all feel bound by the A.A. Tradition. Indeed the Conference is named "the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous." The Traditions themselves outline the general basis on which we may best conduct our services. The Traditions express the principles and attitudes of prudence that make for harmony. Therefore A. A.'s Twelve Traditions set the pattern of unity and of function which our General Service Conference is expected to exemplify at the highest possible degree.

The Warranties of Article 12 are as follows:

*Warranty One:* "The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power." What is meant by "perilous wealth or power"? Does it mean that the Conference should have virtually no money and no authority? Obviously not. Such a condition would be dangerous and absurd. Nothing but an ineffective anarchy could result from it. We must use some money, and there must be *some* authority to serve. But how much? How and where should we draw these lines?

The principal protection against the accumulation of too much money and too much authority in Conference hands is to be found in the A.A. Tradition itself. So long as our General Service Board refuses to take outside contributions and holds each individual's gift to A.A.'s world services at a modest figure, we may be sure that

we shall not become wealthy in any perilous sense. No great excess of group contributions over legitimate operating expenses is ever likely to be seen. Fortunately the A.A. Groups have a healthy reluctance about the creation of unneeded services which might lead to an expensive bureaucracy in our midst. Indeed, it seems that the chief difficulty will continue to be that of effectively informing the A.A. groups as to what the financial needs of their world services actually are. Since it is certain therefore that we shall never become too wealthy through group contributions, we need only to avoid the temptation of taking money from the outside world.

In the matter of giving Delegates, Trustees, and staff enough authority, there can be little risk, either. Long experience, now codified in these Twelve Concepts, suggests that we are unlikely to encounter problems of too much service authority. On the contrary, it appears that our difficulty will be how to maintain enough of it. We must recall that we are protected from the calamities of too much authority by rotation, by voting participation, and by careful chartering. Nevertheless, we do hear warnings about the future rise of a dictator in the Conference or at the Headquarters. To my mind this is an unnecessary worry. Our setup being what it is, such an aspirant couldn't last a year. And in the brief time he did last, what would he use for money? Our Delegates, directly representing the groups, control the ultimate supply of our service funds. Therefore they constitute a direct check upon the rise of too much personal authority. **Taken** all together, these **factors** seem to be reliable safeguards against too much money and too much authority.

We have seen why the Conference can never have any dangerous degree of human power, but we must not overlook the fact that there is another sort of authority and power which it cannot be *without*: the spiritual power which flows from the activities and attitudes of truly humble, unselfish, and dedicated A.A. servants. This is the real power that causes our Conference to function. It has been well said of our servants, "They do not drive us by mandate; they lead us by example." While we have made abundantly sure that they will never drive us, I am confident that they will afford us an ever-greater inspiration as they continue to lead by example.

*Warranty Two*: "Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle."

**In** this connection we should pause to review our attitudes concerning money and its relation to service effort.

Our attitude toward the giving of time when compared with our attitude toward giving money presents an interesting contrast. Of course we give a lot of our time to A.A. activities for our own protection and growth. But we also engage ourselves in a truly sacrificial giving for the sake of our groups, our areas and for A.A. as a whole.

Above all, we devote ourselves to the newcomer, and this is our principal Twelfth Step work. In this activity we often take large amounts of time from business hours. Considered in terms of money, these collective sacrifices add up to a huge sum. But we do not think that this is anything unusual. We remember that people once gave their time to us as we struggled for sobriety. We know, too, that nearly the whole combined income of A.A. members, now more than a billion dollars a year, has been

a direct result of A.A.'s activity. Had nobody recovered, there would have been no income for any of us.

But when it comes to the actual spending of cash, particularly for A.A. service overhead, many of us are apt to turn a bit reluctant. We think of the loss of all that earning power in our drinking years, of those sums we might have laid by for emergencies or for education for the kids. We find, too, that when we drop money in the meeting hat there is no such bang as when we talk for hours to a newcomer. There is not much romance in paying the landlord. Sometimes we hold off when we are asked to meet area or Intergroup service expenses. As to world services, we may remark, "Well, those activities are a long way off, and our group does not really need them. Maybe nobody needs them." These are very natural and understandable reactions, easy to justify. We can say, "Let's not spoil A.A. with money and service organization. Let's separate the material from the spiritual. That will really keep things simple."

But in recent years these attitudes are everywhere on the decline; they quickly disappear when the real need for a given A.A. service becomes clear. To make such a need clear is simply a matter of right information and education. We see this in the continuous job now being done with good effect for our world service by Delegates, Committee Members, and General Service Representatives. They are finding that money-begging by pressure exhortation is unwanted and unneeded in A.A. They simply portray what the giver's service dollar really brings in terms of steering alcoholics to A.A., and in terms of our over-all unity and effectiveness. This much done, the hoped-for contributions are forthcoming. The donors can seldom see what the exact result has been. They well know, however, that countless thousands of other alcoholics and their families are certain to be helped.

When we look at such truly anonymous contributions in this fashion, and as we gain a better understanding of their continuous urgency, I am sure that the voluntary contributions of our A.A. groups, supplemented by many modest gifts from individual A.A.'s, will pay our world service bills over future years, in good times at any rate.

We can take comfort, too, from the fact that we do not have to maintain an expensive corps of paid workers at World Headquarters. In relation to the ever-growing size of A.A. the number of workers has declined. In the beginning our World Service Office engaged one paid worker to each thousand of A.A. members. Ten years later we employed one paid worker to each three thousand A.A.'s. Today we need only one paid helper to every seven thousand recovered alcoholics.<sup>1</sup> The present cost of our world services (\$200,000 annually as of 1960) is today seen as a small sum in relationship to the present reach of our Fellowship. Perhaps no other society of our size and activity has such a low general overhead.

These reassurances of course cannot be taken as a basis for the abandonment of the policy of financial prudence.

The fact and the symbol of A.A.'s fiscal common sense can be seen in the Reserve Fund of our General Service Board. As of now this amounts to little more than \$200,000 — about one year's operating expense of our World Office? This is what we have saved over the last twenty years, largely from the income of our books. This

is the fund which has repeatedly prevented the severe crippling, and sometimes the near collapse, of our world services.

In about half of the last twenty years, A.A. group contributions have failed to meet our world needs. But the Reserve Fund, constantly renewed by book sales, has been able to meet these deficits — and save money besides. What this has meant in the lives of uncounted alcoholics who might never have reached us had our services been weak or nonexistent, no one can guess. Financial prudence has paid off in lives saved.

These facts about our Reserve Fund need to be better understood. For sheer lack of understanding, it is still often remarked: (1) that the Reserve Fund is no longer needed, (2) that if the Reserve Fund continues to grow, perilous wealth will result, (3) that the presence of such a Reserve Fund discourages group contributions, (4) that because we do not abolish the Reserve Fund, we lack faith, (5) that our A.A. books ought to be published at cost so these volumes could be cheapened for hard-up buyers, (6) that profit-making on our basic literature is counter to a sound spirituality. While these views are by no means general, they are typical. Perhaps, then, there is still a need to analyze them and answer the questions they raise.

Let us therefore try to test them. Do these views represent genuine prudence? Do we lack faith when we prudently insist on solvency?

By means of cheap A.A. books, should we engage, as a fellowship, in this sort of financial charity? Should this sort of giving not be the responsibility of individuals? Is the Headquarters' income from A.A. books really a profit after all?

As this is written, 1960, our Headquarters operation is just about breaking even. Group contributions are exceeding our service needs by about 5%. The A.A. Grapevine continues in the red? Compared with earlier days, this is wonderful. Nevertheless this is our state in the period of the greatest prosperity that America has ever known. If this is our condition in good times, what would happen in bad times? Suppose that the Headquarters income were decreased 25 % by a depression, or that expenses were increased 25% by a steep inflation. What would this mean in hard cash?

The World Service Office would show a deficit of \$50,000 a year and the Grapevine would put a \$20,000 annual deficit on top of this. We would be faced with a gaping total deficit of \$70,000 every twelve months. If in such an emergency we had no reserve and no book income, we would soon have to discharge one-third of our thirty paid workers and A.A. staff members. Much mail would go unanswered, pleas for information and help ignored. The Grapevine would have to be shut down or reduced to a second-rate bulletin. The number of Delegates attending our yearly General Service Conference would have to be drastically reduced. Practically and spiritually, these would be the penalties were we to dissipate our Reserve Fund and its book income.

Happily, however, we do not have to face any such slash as this. Our present reserve and its book income could see us through several years of hard times without the slightest diminution in the strength and quality of our world effort.

It is the fashion nowadays to believe that America can never see another serious business upset. We can certainly hope and pray that it will not. But is it wise for

us of A.A. to make a huge bet — by dissipating our own assets — that this could never happen? Would it not be far better, instead, for us to increase our savings in this period when the world about us in all probability has already borrowed more money than can ever be repaid?

Now let us examine the claim that the presence of our Reserve Fund discourages group contributions. It is said that the impression is created that A.A. Headquarters is already well off and that hence there is no need for more money. This is not at all the general attitude, however, and its effect on contributions is probably small.

Next comes the question of whether A.A. as a whole should go in for what amounts to a money charity to individual newcomers and their sponsors — via the selling of our books at cost or less. Up to now we A.A.'s have strongly believed that money charity to the individual should not be a function of the A.A. groups or of A.A. as a whole. To illustrate: when a sponsor takes a new member in hand, he does not in the least expect that his group is going to pay the expenses he incurs while doing a Twelfth Step job. The sponsor may give his prospect a suit of clothes, may get him a job, or present him with an A.A. book. This sort of thing frequently happens, and it is fine that it does. But such charities are the responsibility of the sponsor and not of the A.A. group itself. If a sponsor cannot give or lend an A.A. book, one can be found in the library. Many groups sell books on the installment plan. There is no scarcity of A.A. books; more than a half million are now in circulation. Hence there seems no really good reason why A.A. services should supply everybody with cheap books, including the large majority who can easily pay the going price. It appears to be altogether clear that our world services need those book dollars far more than the buyers do.

Some of us have another concern, and this is related to so-called book “profits.” The fact that A.A. Headquarters and most of the groups sell books for more than they cost is thought to be spiritually bad. But is this sort of noncommercial book income really a profit after all? In my view, it is not. This set income to the groups and to A.A.'s General Services is actually the sum of a great many contributions which the book buyers make to the general welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous. The certain and continuous solvency of our world services rests squarely upon these contributions. Looked at in this way, our Reserve Fund is seen to be actually the aggregate of many small financial sacrifices made by the book buyers. This fund is not the property of private investors; it is wholly owned by A.A. itself.

While on the subject of books, perhaps a word should be said concerning my royalties from them. This royalty income from the book buyers has enabled me to do all the rest of my A.A. work on a full-time volunteer basis. These royalties have also given me the assurance that, like other A.A.'s, I have fully earned my own separate livelihood. This independent income also has enabled me to think and act independently of money influences of any kind — a situation which has at times been very advantageous to A.A. as well as to me personally. Therefore I hope and believe that my royalty status will continue to be considered a fair and wise arrangement.

**Warranty Three:** “None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.”

We have learned that this principle is of incalculable value to the harmonious conduct of our Conference affairs. Its application in our structure has already been extensively discussed under the Concept entitled “The Right of Participation,” which emphasizes that our world servants, both as individuals and as groups, shall be entitled to voting rights in reasonable proportion to their several responsibilities.

Because this right of participation is so important we have made it the subject of this Warranty, thus providing insurance that Conference action alone can never overturn or amend this right. For any such purpose widespread group consent would be needed, which would probably prove difficult though not necessarily impossible for the Conference to obtain. We believe that our whole service experience fully justifies the taking of this strong stand against the creation of unqualified authority at any point in our Conference structure.

It is to be noted, too, that this **Warranty** against absolute authority is **far** more general and sweeping in its nature than a guarantee of voting participation. It really means that we of A.A. will not tolerate absolute human authority in any form. The voting rights urged under our concept of “Participation” are simply the practical means of checking any future tendency to an unqualified authority of any sort. This healthy state of affairs is of course further **re-inforced** by our concepts of “Appeal and Petition.”

Many **A.A.’s** have already begun to call Article **12** of the Conference Charter “The A.A. Service Bill of Rights.” This is because they see in these Warranties, and especially in this one, an expression of deep and loving respect for the spiritual liberties of their fellows. May God grant that we shall never be so unwise as to settle for anything less.

**Warranty Four:** “That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.”

Here on the one hand we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand we take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision that we are called upon to make in the Conference.

When we take decisions in this fashion, the Conference voice speaks with an authority and a confidence that a simple majority could never give it. If any remain in opposition, they are far better satisfied because their case has had a full and fair hearing.

And when a decision taken in substantial unanimity does happen to go wrong, there can be no heated recriminations. Everybody will be able to say, “Well, we had a careful debate, we took the decision, and it turned out to be a bad one. Better luck next time!”

Like many very high ideals, the principle of substantial unanimity does, however, have certain practical limitations. Occasionally a Conference decision will be of such extreme urgency that something has to be done at once. In such a case we cannot allow a minority, however well-intended, to block a vitally needed action which is evidently in the best interests of A.A. Here we shall need to trust the majority,

sometimes a bare majority, to decide whether Conference debate is to be terminated and a final action taken. In certain other cases, the majority will also have to exercise this undoubted right. Suppose, for example, that a small minority obstinately tries to use the principle of substantial unanimity to block a clearly needed action. In such an event it would be the plain duty of the majority to over-ride such a misuse of the principle of substantial unanimity.

Nevertheless our experience shows that majorities will seldom need to take such radical stands as these. Being generally animated by the spirit of "substantial unanimity," we have found that our Conference can nearly always be guided by this valued principle.

In passing it should be noted that the Conference will sometimes have to decide, with respect to a particular question, what the requirements of substantial unanimity are going to be — whether a two-thirds, threequarters, or even a greater majority, will be required to settle a particular question. Such an advance agreement can, of course, be had on a simple majority vote.

Concluding the discussion on this Warranty, it can be said that without question both the practical and spiritual results of the practice of substantial unanimity already have been proved to be very great indeed.

*Warranty Five:* "That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy."

Practically all societies and governments feel it necessary to inflict personal punishments upon individual members for violations of their beliefs, principles, or laws. Because of its special situation, Alcoholics Anonymous finds this practice unnecessary. When we of A.A. fail to follow sound spiritual principles, alcohol cuts us down. Therefore no humanly administered system of penalties is needed. This unique condition is an enormous advantage to us all, one on which we can fully rely and one which we should never abandon by a resort to the methods of personal attack and punishment. Of all societies ours can least afford to risk the resentments and conflicts which would result were we ever to yield to the temptation to punish in anger.

For much the same reason we cannot and should not enter into public controversy, even in self-defense. Our experience has shown that, providentially it would seem, A.A. has been made exempt from the need to quarrel with anyone, no matter what the provocation. Nothing could be more damaging to our unity and to the world-wide good will which A.A. enjoys, than public contention, no matter how promising the immediate dividends might appear.

Therefore it is evident that the harmony, security, and future effectiveness of A.A. will depend largely upon our maintenance of a thoroughly nonaggressive and pacific attitude in all our public relations. This is an exacting assignment, because in our drinking days we were prone to anger, hostility, rebellion, and aggression. And even though we are now sober, the old patterns of behavior are to a degree still with us, always threatening to explode on any good excuse. But we know this, and therefore I **feel** confident that in the conduct of our public affairs we shall always find the grace to exert an effective restraint.

We enjoy certain inherent advantages which should make our task of self-restraint relatively easy. There is no really good reason for anyone to object if a great many drunks get sober. Nearly everyone can agree that this is a good thing. If, in **the** process, we are forced to develop a certain amount of honesty, humility, and tolerance, who is going to kick about that? If we recognize that religion is the province of the clergy and the practice of medicine is for doctors, we can helpfully cooperate with both. Certainly there is little basis for controversy in these areas. It is a fact that A.A. has not the slightest reform or political complexion. We try to pay our **own** expenses, and we strictly mind our single purpose.

These are some of the reasons why A.A. can easily be at peace with the whole world. These are the natural advantages which we must never throw away by foolishly entering the arena of public controversy or punitive action against anybody.

Because our General Service Conference represents us all, this body is especially charged with the duty of setting the highest possible standard with respect to these attitudes of no punishments and no public controversy. The Conference will have to do more than just represent these principles; it will frequently have to apply them to specific situations. And, at times, the Conference will need to take certain protective actions, especially in the area of Tradition violations. This action, however, never need be punitively or aggressively controversial at the public level.

Let us now consider some typical situations that may often require Conference consideration and sometimes definite action:

Let us suppose that A.A. does fall under sharp public attack or heavy ridicule; and let us take the particular case where such pronouncements happen to have little or no justification in fact.

Almost without exception it can be confidently estimated that our best defense in these situations would be no defense whatever — namely, complete silence at the public level. Unreasonable people are stimulated all the more by opposition. If in good humor we leave them strictly alone, they are apt to subside the more quickly. If their attacks persist and it is plain that they are misinformed, it may be wise to communicate with them in a temperate and informative way; also in such a manner that they cannot use our communication as a springboard for fresh assault. Such **com-** munications need seldom be made by the Conference officially. Very often we can use the good offices of friends. Such messages from us should never question the motives of the attackers; they should be purely informative. These communications should also be private. If made public, they will often be seized upon as a fresh excuse for controversy.

If, however, a given criticism of A.A. is partly or wholly justified, it may be well to acknowledge this privately to the critics, together with our thanks — still keeping away, however, from the public level.

But under no conditions should we exhibit anger or any punitive or aggressive intent. Surely this should be our inflexible policy. Within such a framework the Conference and the Headquarters will **always** need to make a thoughtful estimate of what or what not should be done in these cases.

We may be confronted by public violations of the A.A. Traditions. Individuals,

outside organizations, and even our own members sometimes may try to use the A.A. name for their own private purposes. As A.A. grows in size and public recognition, the temptation to misuse our name may increase. This is why we have assigned to our Conference a protective task in respect to such conditions. The Conference, as we know, is the “guardian” of the A.A. Traditions. There has always been some confusion about this term “guardianship,” and perhaps we should try to clear it up.

To the minds of some **A.A.’s**, “guardianship” of the A.A. Traditions implies the right and the duty on the part of the Conference to publicly punish or sue every **wilful** violator. But we could not adopt a worse policy; indeed such aggressive public acts would place the Conference in the position of having violated one A.A. Tradition in order to defend another. Therefore aggressive or punitive action, even in this area, must be omitted.

Privately, however, we can inform Tradition-violators that they are out of order. When they persist, we can follow up by using such other resources of persuasion as we may have, and these are often considerable. Manifested in this fashion, a persistent firmness will often bring the desired result.

In the long run, though, we shall have to rely mainly upon the pressures of A.A. opinion and public opinion. And to this end we shall need to maintain a continuous education of public communications channels of all kinds concerning the nature and purpose of our Traditions.

Whenever and however we can, we shall need to inform the general public also; especially upon misuses of the **name** Alcoholics Anonymous. This combination of counter forces can be very discouraging to violators or would-be violators. Under these conditions they soon find their deviations to be unprofitable and unwise. Our experience has shown that continuous and general education respecting our Traditions will be a reliable preventive and protection in the years to come.

Feeling the weight of all these forces, certain members who run counter to **A.A.’s** Traditions sometimes say that they are being censored or punished and that they are therefore being governed. It would appear, however, that **A.A.’s** right to object calmly and privately to specific violations is at least equal to the rights of the violators to violate. This cannot accurately be called a governmental action. Some deviators have suffered rather severe personal criticism from individual A.A. members, and this is to be deplored. However this is no reason for us to stop reminding all concerned of the undesirability of breaking **A.A.’s** Traditions before the entire public. It can be said in all **fairness** that the difficulties of those who contravene the Traditions are chiefly troubles of their own making.

Another kind of problem that merits consideration is the occasional severe internal disagreement among us that comes to unwelcome public attention. For example, we once hit the headlines with a pretty hardbitten lawsuit wherein two factions of **A.A.’s** were competing for the possession of the A.A. name for Intergroup use, the name having been incorporated by one of them. In another instance in an overseas area there was some rather bad publicity when a considerable section of the groups there became convinced they ought to accept money subsidies from their country’s government to promote A.A. work, the A.A. Tradition notwithstanding. This internal

difficulty should not have surfaced before the public because there was certainly nothing about it that mutual understanding and good temper could not have readily handled.

Fortunately this sort of episode has been infrequent and relatively harmless. But such difficulties do pose certain questions for the future. What should our General Service Conference do about this sort of thing?

Always remembering group autonomy and the **fact** that **A.A.'s** World Headquarters is not a police operation, the most that can be done in most cases is to make an offer of mediation. What the Tradition in this respect means, and what our experience with it has been, can always be offered as a matter of information. We can always urge the avoidance of any breakthrough of such disagreements at the public level. All parties can remember that unfavorable criticism or ridicule which might ensue from such conflicts can so reflect upon A.A. as to keep new prospects from joining up.

Then, too, a great many of these difficulties with the Tradition are of strictly local concern, there being no serious national or international implication. Many of them represent honest differences of opinion as to how the Tradition should be interpreted: whether a lenient or strict observance would be the better thing. Especially when operating below the public level, our experience with the Tradition reveals gray areas, where neither white or black interpretations seem possible. Here the violations are often so debatable and inconsequential they are hardly worth bothering about. Here we usually refrain from offering suggestions, unless they are insisted upon. We **feel** that these problems must be solved chiefly by the local people concerned.

There is, too, a grave problem that we have never yet had to face. This would be in the nature of a deep rift running clear across A.A. — a cleavage of opinion so serious that it might involve a withdrawal of some of our membership into a new society of their own, or in their making an alliance with an outside agency in contravention of the A.A. Tradition. This would be the old story of split and schism of which history is so full. It might be powered **by** religious, political, national, or racial forces. It might represent an honest effort to change A.A. for the better. But it would certainly pose the Conference a question of what to do, or not to do.

Such a development is hard to imagine. We **A.A.'s** usually assume that we have too much at stake and too much in common to succumb to this very ordinary ailment of the world about us. Yet this comforting assurance is no reason for refusing to give this contingency some calm forethought. If it ever came, such a development might be a terrific surprise and shock. Suddenly aroused passions could flare, making any truly constructive solution immensely difficult, perhaps impossible.

Because society everywhere is in such a state of fission to&y, many of us have given this subject a great deal of consideration. Our considered opinion is this: that the best possible Conference attitude in such a circumstance would be that of almost complete nonresistance — certainly no anger and certainly no attack. We have no doctrine that has to be maintained. We have no membership that has to be enlarged. We have no authority that has to be supported. We have no prestige, power, or pride that has to be satisfied. And we have no property or money that is really worth **quar-**reling about. These are advantages of which we should make the best possible use

in the event of a threatened major division; they should make a calm and considered attitude of nonresistance entirely possible and highly practical.

Indeed we have always practiced this principle on a lesser scale. When a drunk shows up among us and says that he doesn't like the A.A. principles, people, or service management; when he declares that he can do better elsewhere — we are not worried. We simply say, "Maybe your case *is* different. Why don't you try something else?"

If an A.A. member says he doesn't like his own group, we are not disturbed. We simply say "Why don't you try another one? Or start one of your own." When our actors and cops and priests want their own private groups, we say "Fine! Why don't you try that idea out?": When an A.A. group, as such, insists on running a clubhouse, we say "Well, that sometimes works out badly, but maybe you will succeed after all." If individual A.A.'s wish to gather together for retreats, Communion breakfasts, or indeed any undertaking at all, we still say "Fine. Only we hope you won't designate your efforts as an A.A. group or enterprise." These examples illustrate how far we have already gone to encourage freedom of assembly, action, and even schism. To all those who wish to secede from A.A. we extend a cheerful invitation to do just that. If they can do better by other means, we are glad. If after a trial they cannot do better, we know they face a choice: they can go mad or die or they can return to Alcoholics Anonymous. The decision is wholly theirs. (As a matter of fact, most of them do come back.)

In the light of all this experience, it becomes evident that in the event of a really extensive split we would not have to waste time persuading the dissenters to stay with us. In good confidence and cheer, we could actually invite them to secede and we would wish them well if they did so. Should they do better under their new auspices and changed conditions, we would ask ourselves if we could not learn from their fresh experience. But if it turned out they did worse under other circumstances and that there was a steady increase in their discontent and their death rate, the chances are very strong that most of them would eventually return to A.A.

Without anger or coercion we would need only to watch and to wait upon God's will.

Unless we make a problem where there really is none at all, there need be no difficulty. We could still go about our business in good cheer. The supply of drunks in our time will be inexhaustible, and we can continue to be glad that we have evolved at least one formula by which many will come to sobriety and a new life.

We have a saying that "A.A. is prepared to give away all the knowledge and all the experience it has — all excepting the A.A. name itself." We mean by this that our principles can be used in any application whatever. We do not wish to make them a monopoly of our own. We simply request that the public use of the A.A. name be avoided by those other agencies who wish to avail themselves of A.A. techniques and ideas. In case the A.A. name should be misapplied in such a connection it would of course be the duty of our General Service Conference to press for the discontinuance of such a practice — always short, however, of public quarreling about the matter.

The protection of the A.A. name is of such importance to us that we once thought

of incorporating it everywhere throughout the world, thereby availing ourselves of legal means to stop any misuse. We even thought of asking Congress to grant us the unusual favor of a Congressional incorporation. We felt that the existence of these legal remedies might prove to be a great deterrent?

But after several years of deliberation, our General Service Conference decided against such a course. The dramatic story of this debate and its conclusion may be found in our history book "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age." Those early Conferences believed that the power to sue would be a dangerous thing for us to possess. It was recognized that a public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we may not engage. To make our legal position secure, it would have been necessary to incorporate our whole Fellowship, and no one wished to see our spiritual way of life incorporated. It seemed certain that we could confidently trust A.A. opinion, public opinion, and God Himself to take care of Alcoholics Anonymous in this respect.

**Warranty Six:** "That though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in **spirit.**"<sup>5</sup>

In preceding Concepts, much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the A.A. Traditions accord to the individual member and to his group: no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to A.A. principles; no fees or dues to be levied — voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from A.A. — membership always to be the choice of the individual; each A.A. group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes — it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure A.A. as a whole; and finally that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group provided that, as **a group, they** have no other purpose or affiliation.

It is probable that we **A.A.'s** possess more and greater freedom than any fellowship in the world today. As we have already seen, we claim this as no virtue. We know that we personally have to choose conformity to **A.A.'s** Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions or else face dissolution and death, both as individuals and as groups.

Because we set such a high value on our great liberties, and cannot conceive a time when they will need to be limited, we here specially enjoin our General Service Conference to abstain completely **from** any and all acts of authoritative government which could in any wise curtail **A.A.'s** freedom under God. The maintenance of these freedoms in our Conference is a great and practical guarantee that the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit.

Therefore we expect that our Conferences will always try to act in the spirit of mutual respect and love — one member for another. In turn, this sign signifies that mutual trust should prevail; that no action ought to be taken in anger, haste, or recklessness; that care will be observed to respect and protect all minorities; that no action should ever be personally punitive; that whenever possible, important actions will be taken in substantial unanimity; and that our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great or small, whether these be found in the

majority or in the minority.

The sum of these several attitudes and practices is, in our view, the very essence of democracy — in action and spirit.

Freedom under God to grow in His likeness and image will ever be the quest of the Alcoholics Anonymous. May our General Service Conference be always seen as a chief symbol of this cherished liberty.

To a man, we of A.A. believe that our freedom to serve is truly the freedom **by** which we live — the freedom in which we have our being.

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<sup>1</sup>1988—about one to more than fourteen thousand.

<sup>2</sup>In 1987, the \$7,411,000 Reserve Fund would have covered about eleven and one-half months' operating expense.

<sup>3</sup>The comparable current information is that, in 1987, contributions fell short of group services by \$1,171,600 (office expenses were a net income of \$278,200, while other expenses of the General Service Board were a net expense of \$1449,700); the difference was made up by publishing income. The Grapevine operates at about breakeven.

<sup>4</sup>However, the name Alcoholics Anonymous, the abbreviation **A. A.**, and the triangle-in-circle symbol were all legally registered in 1973.

<sup>5</sup>Bill here, apparently inadvertently, used the phrase "in action and spirit," instead of "in thought and action," that appears elsewhere in both the Conference Charter and the statement of Concept XII.



*This is A.A. General Service  
Conference-approved literature*