



WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

May 14, 1984

To the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous:

At the WSC-84 the following motion was adopted:
by a vote of; 37 YES, 11 NO, 0 ABSTENTIONS

"That the next printing of the Basic Text reflect the wording used in the Special Edition and the first Edition for Tradition Four (4) on P. 61 and Tradition Nine (9) on P. 68 in the current edition."

Later in the conference, during reconsideration, on a vote of; 40 YES, 0 NO, 7 ABSTENTIONS, it was decided to send the matter out to the fellowship for a group conscience decision. Each GSR is requested to indicate the group's conscience on this form and forward it to the ASR. ASR's will in turn forward these to the RSR not later than June 15, 1984. The Conference motion requires receipt of responses from each region by June 30, 1984.

Following is the specific language in question. The underlined portions did not appear in the Limited and First Edition, but does appear in the Second Edition:

Tradition Four, Second Paragraph:

"The answer is that these things are not N.A."

"All else is not N.A."

"Whether we choose to utilize these services is up to the group."

Tradition Nine, Second Paragraph:

"None of them has the power to rule, censor, decide or dictate."

"They exist solely to serve the fellowship, but they are not a part of Narcotics Anonymous."

While the book was being prepared for printing (in 1982), the WSO and WSB acted to have the underlined language removed. The fellowship, however, was not informed of this decision. As a result, at WSC-83, a motion was adopted to return the book to its approval form.

If you agree with changing the language back to that which was shown in the First Edition, then vote "yes." If you do not agree with that decision and wish the sentences to be as shown in the Second Edition then vote "no."

On the following pages are discussions, which respectively favor and oppose the change.

_____ Yes (Do take sentences out)
_____ No (Don't take sentences out)

THE REASONS WHY OUR BASIC TEXT SHOULD BE CHANGED

Quoted below in its entirety is a letter from some members of an NA group in Nebraska. This letter presents a clear analysis of problems related to language in our Text and represents just one of many inquiries the World Service Board of Trustees has received with respect to the language cited. The material causing the problems appears in Tradition Four and Tradition Nine, of Chapter 6 which explains the Traditions.

"Dear Friends:

We have some questions regarding the 12 Traditions of N.A. that we would like to have answered. There are some ideas in the blue book [Second Edition] "Narcotics Anonymous" that are not in the red special edition of "Narcotics Anonymous."

We are sure you are aware of these changes but we will go through them anyway for the sake of clarification. The underlined words are the additions in the blue book [Second Edition] that do not appear in the red book.

Tradition four, page 61, "What about our service committees, our offices, activities, and all the other things that go into N.A. The answer is that these things are not N.A. all else is not N.A."

Tradition nine, page 68, "They exist solely to serve the fellowship, but they are not a part of N.A."

These three additions to the traditions seem contradictory and are highly confusing.

Going to an N.A. meeting, making coffee at a meeting and cleaning up afterward, putting money in the hat when it is passed around, talking to a newcomer, and serving as a secretary or treasurer is N.A. service work, in our opinion. What about being a G.S.R.; A.S.R., R.S.R., chairperson, treasurer, or secretary on any other level than just group level? What about our committees on the area, region, or world level? Are these things not N.A. services also? The blue book puts these things on the level of a related facility, "... a halfway house, detox center, a counseling center, a clubhouse ..." as listed in the sixth tradition on page 64.

Why is there a W.S.C. approved "N.A. Service Manual" outlining and defining these things if they "are not a part of N.A."? In the "Newsline" Volume 1, we as group members were cautioned about breaking the sixth tradition. Are we breaking this tradition by making announcements concerning our service committees (A.S.C., P.I., H&I, etc.)? Are our A.S.C.'s, R.S.C.'s, and W.S.O. breaking traditions by making announcements concerning area, region, and world level business? (We guess this last point is most considering the fact that as outlined in tradition nine - A.S.C., R.S.C., W.S.C., W.S.O., and W.S.B. are "not a part of Narcotics Anonymous.")

These additions to the traditions make traditions six and seven contradict each other. On page 65, concerning tradition seven the book states "We need money to run our groups: there is rent to pay, supplies and literature to buy. We take a collection in our meetings to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to support our services and to further our primary purpose." How can "whatever is left over" go to support our services, without violating tradition six, which says we ought never finance ("supply funds or to help financially" [page 64] any related facility or outside enterprise, if our services "are not a part of N.A.?" Or conversely, can a group make use of these services without paying for them. On page 66 tradition seven says "We decline any outside contributions." Any group that does not pay to have its name on a meeting list or does not pay their share of a 24 hour phone answering service is accepting an outside contribution and is in violation of tradition seven.

Some of us who have been trusted servants on the different levels of the N.A. service structure are confused about the three additions to the blue book that are addressed in this letter. It is our opinion that these are N.A. services and that we have been directly responsible to those we've served - the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Copies of this letter are being sent to the Lincoln area Service Committee, the Nebraska Regional Service Committee, the World Service Conference, the World Service Board of Trustees and the World Service Office. Thank you for your time and service."

The members in Nebraska that wrote this letter are very accurate in their analysis. The Trustees have received numerous letters asking for an interpretation of these conflicting passages during the past year. It has been impossible to explain that the service structure and its elements (Trustees included) are not part of N.A.

It is our belief that the intent of these passages is to establish that Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual fellowship and its essence is one addict sharing experience, strength and hope with another, and not its Service Structure. We share that belief.

Unfortunately what appears in the text does not state this intent but rather saddles us with a Service Structure that is not a part of Narcotics Anonymous, gives the group the power to do anything they choose to do and continue to call themselves an N.A. group, and further prohibits service committees from deciding anything.

Clearly the answer is to correct the language in the text. The action by the Conference quoted on the first page of this packet clearly indicts, with both votes that there is strong support for the change. The issue was more in the nature of whether or not the change should have been made without first going back to the Fellowship for consensus. The following is

intended to explain a few of the reasons why the language should be changed.

1. "The answer is that these things are not NA". "All else is not N.A."

These words place the entire Service Structure outside of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous hence not subject to our Traditions or the will of the Fellowship. Our Traditions are the ties that bind us together and when we place the Service Structure outside of Narcotics Anonymous we then make it accountable to the Fellowship. We thereby create a very dangerous and confusing situation. According to the language quoted, support of Area, Regional and World level services of any kind including compiling, editing and approving literature is a violation of our Traditions. Further our Service Structure which exists outside of NA is not subject to our Traditions

2. "Whether we choose to utilize these services is up to the group". Under this sentence any group may do anything they decide to do and call themselves an N.A. Group. World, Regional and Area level services could not even criticize a group from reading or studying of non N.A. literature at their meetings. All kinds of abuses could occur. This language would allow any group calling themselves N.A., to attach themselves to another organization or use materials from another program or write their own materials

3. "None of them has the power to rule, censor, decide or dictate."

There is no problem with the words, "rules, censor or dictate." We believe the Service Structure of N.A. cannot be allowed to rule, censor or dictate. However by including the word "decide", the sentence negates the entire Service Structure. According to this statement Area, Regional and World level service committees cannot decide anything. Activities Committees cannot decide to hold fund raisers, or dances. The World Service Conference cannot decide to approve literature. A region cannot decide to form a Hospitals and Institutions Committee and that committee cannot decide to take panels into the institutions in its area. With this language service committees cannot serve the purposes intended.

4. "They exist solely to serve the fellowship, but they are not a part of Narcotics Anonymous."

This again places the Service Structure outside of Narcotics Anonymous and the same problems apply as with the first statement. If the Area or Regional Service Committees, or World Service Conference are not part of N.A. then to involve them in affairs of the spiritual fellowship would be a clear violation of Tradition. The language of this sentence is simply

contradictory at best.

When we were practicing our disease there was a vast difference between what we said and what we did. In our recovery there are often differences between what we say and what we do but most of us work our program in an attempt to close this gap. In our book there currently exists an enormous difference between what we practice and what we preach.

We have a Service Structure currently operating within N.A. even though we say it doesn't and a Service Structure which makes all kinds of decisions even though our Text says it does not.

With these passages we have set our stage for blatant violations of our Traditions. We have created a confusing and contradictory situation which is currently causing us problems and will continue to cause us problems unless corrected.

We believe these passages should be changed.

THE REASONS WHY THE SECOND EDITION SHOULD REMAIN AS APPROVED

1. Chapter Six Tradition Four, 2ND Paragraph:

"The answer is that these things are not N.A." "All else is not N.A."

The reason that we want these lines left in the Basic Text, Narcotics Anonymous, is to protect those members who, from time to time take issue with what seems to be going on in N.A. services. We all love N.A., and our love makes us vulnerable. This line keeps us from identifying the miracles of our recovery with the service boards and committees themselves.

Our Concern is to protect members who may at times violently disagree with the structure, rightly or wrongly. We feel that they should see the structure and the meetings, recovery and the spiritual program of N.A. in close, yet in separate lights so that when they are hurting and upset, possessed by the irrational feelings which overwhelm reason and make surrender difficult, they can still comfortably go to their sponsor, their meetings and read their literature to seek comfort, hope and help in staying clean that day.

2. Chapter Six Tradition Four, 2ND Paragraph

"Whether we choose to utilize these services is up to the group."

This sentence emphasises group autonomy which is part of our freedom in N.A. While this sentence may be true in practice, it can be abused if exercised along lines of personal preference as opposed to group purpose.

3. Chapter Six Tradition Nine 2nd Paragraph

"None of them has the power to rule, censor, decide or dictate."

This sentence emphasizes the spirit of service which comes from the desire to stay clean through helping others and a dependence on a Power greater than ourselves. We admit we are powerless on a continuing daily basis.

When a service board of committee appears to rule, censor, decide or dictate, they do so as a function of group conscience and have no power of their own, except as members of N.A. The need for a statement set forth clearly, emphasizing that group conscience on all major matters relating to approved literature, service guides and works to insure our Unity by giving all our members a say in N.A. While we set up the service boards or committees in the Ninth Tradition, the other half of Tradition Nine restricts the function and power of these same boards and committees.

4. Chapter Six Tradition Nine, 2nd Paragraph

"They exist solely to serve the Fellowship but they are not a part of Narcotics Anonymous."

All members of service boards and committees love N.A. deeply and we don't want their love and service commitment to interfere with their membership in N.A. While in theory this should never happen, our disease makes us particularly susceptible to this. It is all too easy for us to believe we are right and that others are wrong, especially if they disagree with us.

We are capable of justifying our actions where we would not otherwise think of saying or doing things which might work to the injury or detriment of other members.

In solely existing for the Fellowship, members at all levels of service begin to serve a power greater than ourselves instead of serving a separate entity of our service structure. We are a spiritual Fellowship, based on spiritual principles of unity and service. Our service must be for the whole of our Fellowship to ever remind us to place principles before our personalities.