


# WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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TO World Service Conference 1987

FROM:   
Michael Lee, Vice-Chairperson  
World Literature Committee

RE: Acting Chairperson's Report #1

DATE: April 28, 1987

**INTRODUCTION:** The past year has been a difficult yet productive period of growth and change for the World Literature Committee (WLC). In my view we have learned more about our strengths and weaknesses. This report is meant to be an honest, objective, and straightforward inventory of this past year. If we build on our success and learn from our failure, then I believe we have good reason to be optimistic about the future.

This is the longest report that has ever come from the Chairperson of a WSC Committee to the Conference. It reminds me of WSO's past reports. I hope that you will agree that the situation in literature today warrants discussion of the issues I raise in this report.

**WORK COMPLETED:** We are proud to report that the World Literature Committee has completed, and the World Service Office has published, approval-form drafts of the following information pamphlets (I.P.'s) for approval/disapproval one (1) year from now at the 1988 World Service Conference (WSC):

I.P. No. R-2 *The Group Newly Revised*  
I.P. No. R-7 *Am I an Addict? Newly Revised*  
I.P. No. R-10 *Working Step Four in Narcotics Anonymous*  
I.P. No. 23 *Staying Clean on the Outside*  
I.P. No. 24 *Hey! What's the Basket For?*

These I.P.'s represent our major accomplishments for the year and are the best of the good news I have to bring you in this report. We are grateful for the input which came from the many area and regional literature committees that made this work possible, as well as the additional help from the other World Service Conference committees and the Trustees. Together we can!

When you read the proposed Fourth Step Guide, you will find that it has changed significantly. The Committee asked me to report that a large amount of input was received, and the current version is a reflection of that input. There was some concern about how the Fellowship might respond to a piece of literature that has changed substantially between the review and approval stages. Our current guidelines are not specific in resolving this issue as it applies to different

cases. We are surrendered to the will of the Fellowship, as expressed through this Conference, and will accept your direction not only on this specific piece of literature, but also on the entire literature process.

I must also report to you that the World Literature Committee would not have been able to complete *Working Step Four in Narcotics Anonymous* this year if the World Service Office had not agreed to fund the travel and lodging expenses needed for members to attend a Literature Review Committee (LRC) meeting in late November, followed by a full World Literature Committee meeting in mid-February.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the World Literature Committee has been the ability of the members to work together in harmony--reviewing, writing and revising N.A. literature to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We think you will see the improved quality in the literature we produced this past year, and we believe that it will increase your confidence in us.

PROGRESS ON IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY PART TWO. THE TRADITIONS: The World Literature Committee used an ad-hoc committee process (similar to the one used to produce the approval draft of *It Works* Part One) to continue work on our highest priority. The ad-hoc committee, in accordance with our procedural guidelines, completed the initial review of the draft manuscript of the traditions material prepared by the professional writer who is assisting us in this task under the terms of a contract made for us by the World Service Office. The ad-hoc committee met three times (in November, January, and February) and held a series of telephone conference calls in order to accomplish this work. The World Service Office paid for the travel and lodging of all participants. I should also mention that every member of the Board of Trustees has received copies of the draft material as it has been produced and, as a result, the Trustees individually and collectively have contributed substantial input to guide us in our work.

Under the terms of the contract, the professional writer is currently preparing a re-write of the initial draft based on our initial review. The World Literature Committee will be discussing, during its deliberations on this work, our plans for preparing the review-form version of this material for the Fellowship.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP: We did have pretty good continuity of members on the committee this past year, and the new members who became active quickly became productive team participants. However, as in past years, members were elected or drawn who were never active at all. Since repeating the same mistakes while expecting different results is insanity, I want to break down the three parts of the problem as I see it. The three parts are: (1) the individual nominee or committee member; (2) the World Service Conference; and (3) the World Literature Committee.

- (1) First of all, the World Literature Committee needs active members who have the time and resources necessary to do the job. The nature of the Literature Committee's work makes it impractical to participate via the mail. God knows we even tried to write literature on telephone conference calls this past year and discovered the severe limitations involved in this. The World Literature Committee--because of our workload--has had (and will continue to have) a great need to meet more frequently than twice a year at the quarterly workshops. The ability to attend as many meetings as possible is what has given the current committee its continuity from meeting to meeting and resulted in quality literature. This level of commitment also makes it difficult to wear other service hats at either the world or regional level.



Some of our best people on the Committee are already serving N.A. as Trustees or on the World Service Office Board of Directors. Wherever possible, we need to elect directly to the World Literature Committee individuals who have this same kind of knowledge of the program that we value and respect in the Trustees.

- (2) Secondly, the World Service Conference bears a big chunk of responsibility in all of this. Last year the Conference attempted to make the membership of the World Literature Committee reflect the international nature of our Fellowship by electing members from England, West Germany and Australia. Unfortunately, none of these members were able to attend any of the World Literature Committee meetings. An elected Literature Review member from Hawaii had to resign specifically due to lack of funds, although she later made a wonderful contribution to the ad-hoc committee work on the traditions material when the World Service Office agreed to pay for the travel and lodging expenses of our ad-hoc committee. If the Conference gives us goals and priorities to meet, it becomes responsible for ensuring that we have the needed resources. I will say more about this in a minute when I talk about the World Literature Committee budget for 1987-88.
- (3) But first I must finish discussing the problems related to committee membership this past year by acknowledging that responsibility for the third aspect of the problem must fall squarely on the shoulders of the Literature Committee itself. The 1986 Conference gave us increased flexibility under our guidelines to replace members who resign with additional members from the nominee pool. This authority was not used. Poor communication with a couple of committee members who expressed an interest in becoming active at mid-year was also not followed up. I find and admit fault with our failure to manage and make up for the shortcomings in the first two areas. These deficiencies could have been lessened.

COMMITTEE BUDGET AND FUNDING ISSUES: The last World Service Conference Treasury Report I saw showed that the World Literature Committee had spent only \$15,322.93 as of 4/20/87 out of the \$18,140 total authorized by our 1986-87 budget. What is not included anywhere is an accounting of the unknown thousands of dollars the World Service Office Board provided us for travel and lodging for five major committee meetings, an unaccountable number of telephone conference calls (\$500 to \$1,000 each), plus the substantial miscellaneous expenses the World Service Office incurs in helping us with our administrative responsibilities as our general secretary.

The 1987-88 budget we have drawn up so far has had its total increased to \$40,000, but what we have come up with on paper does not really solve, and perhaps even conceals, the real problems. We have taken a stab in the dark and allowed for the additional literature review committee and ad-hoc committee meetings which we anticipate will be necessary. But by having these additional meetings above and beyond the quarterly World Service Conference meetings, we are asking the registered and literature review committee members to make substantial financial sacrifices that past experience has shown most members are unable to make regardless of how dedicated they are.

The work we do has a price tag. We are limited in our ability to estimate from year to year what our costs will be. The important things are that we need flexible budgetary authority to do whatever work you tell us is our priority, and we then need a reliable source of funds. To solve at least part of the problem for this next year I hope to be presenting a proposal, as a result of committee deliberations, which will address the need for funding the travel and lodging of Literature Committee members' participation.

IT WORKS: HOW AND WHY PART ONE. THE STEPS. APPROVAL FORM:

What can I say that won't bring hell's anger down on me? I think the following quote from the Foreword of the Basic Text says it best:

"The full fruit of a labor of love lies in the harvest, and that always comes in its right season."

We are surrendered to whatever direction this Conference gives us. Before you do, there are a couple of points I want to put on the record.

First, let me make the SPIRIT of my concern unmistakably clear. My concern has nothing to do with personal opinion, ego or self-will. Rather, my concern is based upon the practical realities of carrying out YOUR WILL FOR US: We have to have enough knowledge of your will and the power (or resources) to carry that out.

The situation with the step book, I believe, is really a specific example of what is in reality a larger set of problems about the whole process of creating and developing literature in Narcotics Anonymous. It seems that everything having to do with N.A. literature has been very emotional for us. I may be wrong about this, and a lot of other things, but it seems to me that literature is one of the only things that so completely represents the N.A. Fellowship as a whole and to which we attach our name, Narcotics Anonymous, with full force. For this reason, and after trying to get by with less, we now require that new literature be approved by a 2/3 majority of all World Service Conference participants. As a result, what becomes N.A. literature represents a great COMPROMISE for us as a Fellowship of recovering addicts. Because of the emotional nature of literature, and our nature as addicts, it seems that when we have had not only bare majorities, but also less than total unanimity, it has been difficult for the minority (whatever its size) to surrender and accept the larger group conscience.

We have received input, which I have shared with the World Literature Committee, outlining some of the problems which have come up in our literature development process. One of the biggest problems is that the Fellowship does not have commonly accepted policies or standards for the literature we develop. We have a set of procedures but we have found them unwieldy and restrictive. I have been using the term "philosophical differences" to describe the same thing. I believe that there are basic disagreements not only about principles, and about the nature of the content of N.A. literature, but also about the process and procedure.

I made the obvious point to you above about compromise and the emotional nature of these issues, because my theory is that our emotions have gotten in the way of us seeing our lack of common agreement for what it is. I think we have fallen into a trap of seeing the issues in terms of personalities, seeing our disagreements as stemming from certain individuals, groups of individuals, or regions, whereas in reality we have significant differences of opinion about the philosophy of literature and our program. I hope that by suggesting that the issues be viewed from this perspective, that we can have a more constructive and less emotional debate about N.A. literature.

At this point you may be asking, "What does this have to do with the approval-form draft of the steps?" Based upon the hundreds of pages of written



input from nearly every corner of the Fellowship and every level of the service structure, many of these philosophical differences are reflected in the input. Some of these differences are:

- use of personal stories/examples
- style, tone, use of language or terminology
- reading level of the material
- addiction vs. drug addiction
- length of chapters
- "recovery level" of the material

Our philosophy may be as "simple" as the Twelve Steps and Traditions, but our basic problem is arguing about how we are going to describe those fundamental principles in major works. This has not been simple.

Other examples of philosophical differences apply more generally to the literature process itself, but nonetheless result in people taking a pro or con position on the step book in particular as a result of their general point of view. Examples of these issues are: the use of professional writers and/or editors in the literature process; the qualifications and background of professional writers/editors; and the degree of direct Fellowship participation in the literature writing process, that is, how "open" or "closed" the World Literature Committee process is.

Whatever action the Conference takes, these kinds of differences will have to be reconciled. In my judgment the Literature Committee will not be capable of resolving these matters without specific direction from the Conference and a lot of discussion. One of the reasons for this is that the existing active members of the Literature Committee are like a mirror of the different views of the Fellowship as a whole. Also, we are but trusted servants. So, we are going to need specific direction and guidance.

Some of the problems we will need to address are as follows:

1. We do not have an adopted set of standards that we apply to the literature we develop;
2. We do not have a plan for literature development that is based on either a needs assessment or Fellowship consent;
3. We do not utilize enough of our available resources, and we may not be using our resources in the right way;
4. We have not found an appropriate role for the Trustees in the literature process;
5. We do not properly utilize individual members or literature committees;
6. We do not invest sufficient energy into the improvement and utilization of area/regional literature committees;
7. We do not properly utilize the talents and manpower of the World Literature Committee.

Regarding the *It Works* Special Report, I want to make one point clear. It was not a report of the Literature Committee, but of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the World Literature Committee, the World Service Office Board of Directors, World Service Conference Administrative Committee and World Service Board of Trustees, so that is where the responsibility rests. I accept my personal share of this responsibility. In fact, up to now, the Literature Committee has not had the opportunity to discuss the issue as a committee and make its own views known. This illustrates the lack of attention to process, procedure and planning of which we are guilty, one of the mistakes we must learn from. One reflection of the limited discussions the Committee has had so far is the fact that we have put the revision of our Procedural Guidelines and portions of the *Literature Committee*

*Handbook* on our proposed Priority Worklist for 1987-88. This is but a first step for us.

The Committee has expressed a willingness to re-evaluate its procedures for literature development, as well as standards used, and take direction from the Fellowship. In its deliberations this week, we will be discussing a suggestion to hold some type of open participatory conference so that N.A. members, groups and committees will have an opportunity to provide input and express their views on the problems and solutions. Hopefully, our deliberations will result in a recommended plan of action for your consideration on Friday.

Although the Committee unanimously agrees that there are some problems with our current procedures, they do not all agree on the urgency of the problem. There are some who feel that it is more important to address the procedural problems than it is to continue work on any of the current literature projects. There are others who feel that the revision of the procedural guidelines could be accomplished during the coming year along with all other items on the priority list. There are also members who suggest that the procedural revisions could be done by a small ad-hoc committee and then presented to the full committee for consideration. Further discussions within the Committee will be necessary to reach consensus and work out a plan to accomplish this objective.

RELATIONSHIP OF TRUSTEES TO WORLD LITERATURE COMMITTEE/LITERATURE PROCESS: Having mentioned all of the help the Trustees provided, key problems should also be noted. First, because of the differing functions of the Literature Review Committee and the rest of the World Literature Committee, the two Trustees who were not assigned specifically to the Literature Review Committee were not able to participate as much as the Trustee who was assigned to Literature Review.

More importantly, exactly what role, authority, procedure and impact the Board of Trustees should have in the literature process in general needs to be clarified, especially in terms of how this will apply to a specific work like the Traditions book.

ABOUT THE BASIC TEXT: The inability of the Literature Review Committee to reach consensus on making the Basic Text entirely consistent with the unanimously Conference-approved version of the Little White Book was personally very disappointing to me this past year. To better deal with similar situations that come up in future years, and I am proposing to the World Literature Committee for recommendation to you on Friday, new discretionary authority to "update" existing literature based upon Conference changes in one piece of literature that should be made in other pieces of literature for the sake of consistency, or when descriptions of policy, procedure or structure in our recovery or service literature become necessary as a result of Conference action. (For example, the information pamphlet, *The Loner*, contains a description of the *N.A. Way* and the *Newsline*; if the World Service Conference or the World Service Office ever changed one or the other, the descriptions of these publications in this and other pieces of literature would need to be changed.) The intent would be to give the Literature Committee the discretionary authority to update our literature as needed to maintain consistency with other Conference actions.

Regarding the publication of the Fourth Edition of the Basic Text, pending Conference action on the white book consistency motion and the approval of the new index by the Literature Review Committee this week, the World Service Office will be able to proceed with the printing of the Fourth Edition. According to the World Service Office, the printing takes a minimum of eight weeks.

DISCUSSION OF 1987-88 PRIORITY LIST: The most important point is that this year we attempted to come up with a one-year list as called for in our guidelines. Beyond this, I personally have a lot of questions. What is the



relationship between the World Literature Committee priority list and the work that area and regional literature committees do? What kind of group conscience are we getting from the Fellowship about our priorities? "We want it all now, or yesterday," sometimes seems to be the answer we get when we ask the Fellowship to tell us what the need is for a certain piece of literature. What is really most important and what is practical? Also, what is our responsibility to focus the limited attention of the Fellowship? To what extent do we need to coordinate priorities, such as the impact of asking the Fellowship for input on the select Committee's *Guide to Service* at the same time as *It Works*. Can the Fellowship as a whole effectively review two major works at the same time? What do the motions coming from regions related to our priority list say about this procedure? The Literature Committee needs to discuss these issues thoroughly and will need input and direction from Conference participants and the Fellowship.

AREA AND REGIONAL LITERATURE COMMITTEES: We need to improve communication with the 225+ area and regional literature committees. Correspondence has been a problem. A newsletter for area and regional literature committees has been suggested by the World Service Office and will be considered by World Literature Committee.

CONCLUSION: In closing, let me repeat my thanks to all: the members of the World Literature Committee, the World Service Conference Administrative Committee, the Board of Trustees, the World Service Office Board of Directors and the World Service Office staff. I would like to give special thanks to Bob Stone and our project coordinator, Ginni Swanson. In those places where the literature committee fell down this past year, the job of holding us up often fell on Ginni and I am grateful for her work.

To steal a line from the 1981 Literature Chair: "Storm heaven with your prayers and give us the benefit of your written input."

Thank you very much for allowing me to serve Narcotics Anonymous.