

September 29, 1987

To: Bob Rehmar, Chairman  
World Service Board of Trustees  
Re: The role of the Board of Trustees

Prior to 1976, the responsibility for the policy decisions and business functions of Narcotics Anonymous rested squarely on the shoulders of the Board of Trustees. The Board, the few existing service committees, and individual members provided for virtually all the services of our fellowship. Without these efforts N.A., as we know it, would not exist today.

In January of 1976, the Board of Trustees approved a Service Structure by which the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous would become self-governing and responsible for its services. This was called The N.A. Tree and it established a system which we still (with some modification) utilize to provide services. Since that time our Structure has grown and evolved; this is particularly true of our World Services. Some of the components, purposes, functions, and responsibilities have changed. In this process, the role of the World Service Board of Trustees has become increasingly unclear. Our Board, lacking clear direction, has, at times, seemed to flounder in confusion or forced to function in uncertainty. This is no one's fault, but it has impacted all our services by disrupting the delicate balance of systems and relationships which needs to exist within World Services.

It seems that each major part of our World Services needs to be responsible for maintaining at least three critical service systems. Our World Service Conference needs to have a *representative input system*, a *decision making system*, and an *implementation system*. Our World Service Office's responsibilities include a *production system*, a *distribution system*, and a *legal system*. Finally, our World Service Board of Trustees' systems consist of a *resource system*, a *continuity system*, and a *custodial system*. Whenever one of these systems is not functioning well it affects all the other systems and handicaps us in our efforts to fulfill the service needs of the Fellowship. This affects N.A. as a whole.

One clear example of how this happens has been the lack of active WSB Committees to provide experiential resources and continuity for our WSC Committees. The repercussions of this have been that our Office has been forced to exceed its original purposes and our Conference Committees have been pushed towards a closed, semi-dynastic approach in order to complete long term projects. This, in turn, may have affected the ability of WSO and WSC to provide for their own systems by diverting their energies and resources. This is certainly not the only example of the breakdown of a system; every service system has had problems, and there are surely more to come. If we can be more aware we can minimize the impact of future

problems, deal with them more effectively, and thereby improve our services.

I feel that, as a Board, we have a responsibility to do this. We need to purposefully examine ourselves and seek clear direction from the fellowship by restating and redefining our purpose and by presenting this to the fellowship in "WSC Motion" form. I perceive our most basic purpose to be: TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS. Integrity is a spiritual principle and ours is a spiritual purpose. We, certainly, will never be able to fully achieve this purpose; but we can certainly strive for integrity by focussing our energy on developing our *resource system*, our *continuity system*, and our *custodial system*.

Our *resource system* could be strengthened by re-establishing our WSB Committees and seeking out experienced N.A. Members to work with us, increasing our efforts to document the experience of Narcotics Anonymous, establishing resource files available to our service committees, and by taking a more active role in providing for the continuation and growth of N.A. Our *continuity system* could be improved by interfacing more closely with the WSC Committees, increasing our role in planning for the future needs of the Fellowship, improving our communication and cooperation with the WSO Board of Directors, taking on a project to help educate and train Trusted Servants, and by increasing the degree to which we each specialize based on our individual expertise. Our *custodial system* could be significantly increased by expanding the concept of "Guardians of the Traditions" to "Guardians of our Spiritual Principles" (including our Traditions, our Steps, and the principles and concepts they represent), taking a more active role in the development of our International Fellowship (this includes getting involved in the translations problem and re-evaluating the demographics and selection process of our Board), and by pursuing the idea of establishing a legal entity whose sole purpose is to "hold in trust" for our Fellowship the copyrights, patents, and registrations related to Narcotics Anonymous.

Our Board was formed in the 1960's and our role has been changing ever since. We need to continue to evolve and grow to meet the needs of our Fellowship. When we get stuck our service suffers until we can, once again, find clear direction and purpose. I feel that the most important task facing our Board, today, is to re-establish ourselves as a vital part of the Service Structure of Narcotics Anonymous. God help us!

Yours in Fellowship and Service,

Greg Pierce, Trustee