



Conference Report

World Convention Committee Board of Directors

Greetings from the World Convention Corporation. The seven current directors of the corporation are Donald Griffin (WSC-elected), Pedro Castro (WSC-elected), Cary Seltzer (WSO board), Laura Jennison (WSO board), Rogan Allen (WSO board), Ron Sheppard (WSC Administrative Committee), and Steve Severin (WCNA-27 host chair). The WCC Executive Committee consists of Donald Griffin (chairperson), Pedro Castro (vice chairperson), Laura Jennison (secretary), and Cary Seltzer (treasurer).

WCNA-28

The WCC board has chosen Cartagena, Colombia as the site for WCNA-28, to be held 6-9 July 2000. Cartagena is a beautiful Caribbean city that offers the ambiance of the beach alongside a quaint, 16th-century, walled city. We believe that the city of Cartagena will present an excellent opportunity to further carry the NA message. We want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Colombia, Panama, Argentina, and Brazil regions for their hospitality during our site-selection process.

WCNA-29

The WCC board has reduced the potential sites for WCNA-29 (2002) to three cities. Those cities are Montreal, Atlanta, and Orlando. A final round of negotiations in those cities will result in a final site report being generated for review at the July WCC meeting, with a site being selected at that time. We extend our thanks to the Quebec, New England, Greater New York, Greater Philadelphia, Tri-State, Free State, Chesapeake & Potomac, Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, South Florida, and Puerto Rico regions for their willingness to contribute to this process.

Committed Motion #84, WSC'96

Motion #84 from WSC'96 was committed to the WCC for its consideration. The motion reads, "That the WCC research the need for 'common needs' meetings, workshops or forums at World Conventions of NA and report back at the next WSC." The WCC planned to discuss this motion at its annual meeting. This meeting, typically held in November or December, was actually held in January 1997.

In October 1996, before we had the opportunity to consider Motion #84, the Aotearoa New Zealand Region, the maker of Motion #84, submitted Motion #26 for inclusion in *CAR*'97 seeking to change WSC's current policy to allow common needs meetings at world

conventions. By the time we arrived at our January meeting we were confronted with two different motions from the same maker requiring two different actions on the same issue. The board's ability to discuss and make recommendations on Motion #84 seemed to have been undermined by the presence of Motion #26 being included in the *CAR*.

In light of this, it seemed impractical for the board to consider researching an issue that will be decided when Motion #26 is considered at WSC'97. Since this motion is included in the *CAR*, it will be discussed by the fellowship, and the fellowship's conscience will be voiced at WSC'97. We believe this deliberation could satisfy the intent of Motion #84. When discussing Motion #84 at our January 1997 meeting, we were in consensus that no further research could be conducted by us prior to WSC'97 other than the historical information on this issue that we have included in this report. For these reasons, we would recommend no further action on Motion #84 until we receive further direction from the conference.

We also believe it is essential to this discussion that we share with you the following summary of conference history on special interest meetings at world conventions:

- At WSC'87, the conference adopted the world convention guidelines which included the following language regarding special interest meetings:

What about Special Interest? To what extent should special meetings or activities be provided at the world convention? NA world conventions are many things to many people, but most NA members would agree that the world convention is primarily a celebration of our shared recovery, a living testimony to our worldwide unity, and a public statement of our common purpose(to help the addict who still suffers. With these purposes in mind, the idea of special interest meetings at the world convention is narrow and divisive. Special interest meetings compromise the spirit of unity pervading and subvert the purpose of these conventions.

We believe that NA world conventions are not an appropriate place for special interest meetings of Narcotics Anonymous. Unity, however, is something that can always be increased and enhanced. World conventions offer an opportunity for recovering addicts with different backgrounds and lifestyles to learn about each other and, by doing so, break down any remaining barriers between us. The more we know about each other, the more we can help each other.

It is recommended, therefore, that world convention committees be particularly sensitive to the differences in backgrounds of NA members and be careful to select NA speakers who represent a variety of experiences and lifestyles and who carry a message of commonality and unity in recovery.

We also recommend and encourage the program subcommittees of world conventions to schedule workshops open to all NA members which address topics such as sexuality, gender, race, ethnic background, etc., in recovery. These workshops allow us to gain a greater understanding of each other and bring us closer together rather than separate us.

- At WSC'88, the conference further clarified its policy on special interest meetings at world conventions through amending the language adopted at WSC'87 by deleting the following language:

With these purposes in mind, the idea of special interest meetings at the world convention is narrow and divisive. Special interest meetings compromise the spirit of unity pervading and subvert the purpose of these conventions.

We also recommend and encourage the program subcommittees of world conventions to schedule workshops open to all NA members which address topics such as sexuality, gender, race, ethnic background, etc., in recovery. These workshops allow us to gain a greater understanding of each other and bring us closer together rather than separate us.

- The remaining portion of the original language adopted at WSC'87 as amended at WSC'88 was reconsidered by the WCC in 1992. As a result of the WCC board discussions, we proposed Motion #12 in 1992 *Conference Agenda Report* to remove the existing policy from our guidelines. This motion failed due to a lack of 2/3 majority vote; however, the conference was divided on this issue, voting 41 in favor of eliminating the policy, 42 against, and five abstentions.
- Since 1992, the WCC has taken several steps to carry out the current policy in order to ensure diversity in the selection of our speakers. The WCC believes that the most common need our fellowship has is to recover from the disease of addiction. For this reason we select speakers for world conventions who represent a sample of the diversity of our fellowship as a whole. We have worked hard to incorporate this belief into our guidelines. To this end, the following language introduces the section in the WCC Internal Guidelines entitled "Speaker Selection."

A world convention program should be a representation of the diversity of our fellowship. We would like to think that it would not be necessary, but we would remind everyone involved in the speaker selection process to take into consideration issues such as race, sex, sexual preference, and geographic origin.

In addition, the WCC board has taken on significantly more involvement in the final selection of all speakers. This process allows the board to carefully review the recommendation of its host committee in order to create the diversity delineated in our guidelines.

The WCC also works in conjunction with world services to plan service workshops that address the challenges faced by our membership on issues such as HIV in recovery and prejudice and diversity in NA. These service workshops provide us with a forum to discuss how we can work together to address our common needs so that we can recover together. In this way, we believe that we are carrying out our primary purpose in the most responsible manner possible.

Finally, we would remind you that policy established for the world convention is not intended to dictate similar policy be adopted by area and regional convention committees. Nor is this policy intended to encourage similar policy by local NA communities. To the

contrary, we would refer you to the final observations included in the report on special interest meetings presented at WSC'89:

The Ad Hoc Committee on special interest meetings understood from almost its beginnings that resolving the issue of special interests in Narcotics Anonymous might be impossible, that the varying opinions on the subject seemed to be irreconcilable, and that we might be able to offer a perspective that would be so fresh and profound and the entire membership of NA would immediately accept our conclusions. We did, however, feel that if we were able to make some objective observations on the subject (devoid of passion and emotionalism--we might be able to do some good.

Here, then, are the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Committee on Special Interest Meetings:

Special Interest Meetings have existed in Narcotics Anonymous for some time. There does not appear to be anything in the Twelve Traditions which inhibits groups from holding special interest meetings, provided that the group has no requirement for membership rather than a desire to stop using. Special interest meetings tend to survive and flourish in local NA communities where there is a need and a desire for such meetings and do not exist in NA communities where there is no need nor desire.

In Narcotics Anonymous, the World Service Conference does not have the authority to dictate policies to groups, and regional and area service committees do not have the policy making authority over the groups. The only authority present in the groups is a loving God expressed in a group's conscience.

The Ad Hoc Committee on special interest meetings concluded that special interest meetings must be appropriate in some NA communities since they exist and flourish with little controversy in these communities. In NA communities where special interest meetings do not exist, and where the need for them is not apparent, there is no reason to create them. Groups, therefore, exercising their autonomy are best suited to decide whether there is any necessity to have special interest meetings.

In conclusion, we believe that the WSC, not the WCC, should determine policy on this issue. We will then work to carry out the conscience of the conference.

Miscellaneous

Just a reminder that the board has decided to postpone Rhonda Richetta's seating in the past-host-chair position on the WCC Board of Directors until WSC'97, when we will ask the conference to ratify her appointment.

Finally, a complete report of all WCC business will be forthcoming in the WCC Annual Report, to be distributed to conference participants prior to WSC'97.

*Donald Griffin, Chairperson
Pedro Castro, Vice Chairperson*