



# Conference Report

## WSC Policy Committee

Hi, everyone. We hope you enjoyed your holidays and are faring well in this new year. The WSC Policy Committee has been very busy since our last report to you, and we are glad to have the opportunity to update you on a few items prior to the conference.

### Recommendations on regional motions

These seven motions (#16, #17, #19, #20, #21, #22, and #27) are not from WSC'96. They were referred to WSC Policy by the WSC Administrative Committee in November 1996 for recommendations in the 1997 *Conference Agenda Report*. We assessed motions as impacting the world service structure, and recommended in the *CAR* that they be referred to the Transition Group. However, this decision followed a discussion containing two very different views within the committee.

As a committee, we support the conference's decision to delegate to the Transition Group the task of developing and proposing changes to our structure. Within our committee, there exist different beliefs on what this support means. There are those who believe we could support the conference's decision and still provide recommendations on whether to adopt or reject each motion. These members believe that not to do so could leave the conference less prepared to make decisions on motions presented on the conference floor. Others believe that to make recommendations on whether to adopt or reject specific motions would go against the conference's decision to delegate responsibility to the Transition Group. Not only would this interfere with the process begun by the Transition Group, these members say, but it would be premature to contemplate taking specific actions intended to impact a world structure that hasn't even been seen yet.

The latter was the prevailing view of the committee; thus our recommendation. However, it followed serious discussion on how to best serve the conference, and there remain those who believe specific recommendations were in order. It was unanimous, however, that our committee present to you the contents of our discussion in reaching the decision to refer, in an effort to make all viewpoints heard.

### *A Guide to Local Services in Narcotics Anonymous*

By now you have seen the motions we are offering in the *Conference Agenda Report*. We would also like to make you aware of three corrections made to the Guide to Local Services contained in your *Conference Agenda Report*. On page 21, the statement "This material already fellowship-approved" which appeared in the 1996 printing was removed to alleviate confusion. We had received feedback that this statement led some to believe that the service diagram was fellowship-approved, when in fact the statement was referring

only to the Twelve Concepts. Secondly, the MCM/RCM key was mistakenly omitted from page 89 in the 1996 copy, but is in your *CAR'97* copy. Finally, on page 100, although the narrative in this chapter refers to the RCM in the area structure, it was incorrectly labeled in the 1996 diagram as ASR, and is now accurately labeled RCM.

## **Conference orientation**

As reported in November, we have been working on conference orientation material. We are continuing to work with the Administrative Committee, and we finalized a portion of our work at our committee meeting at the end of February. We have developed an outline, coupled with the resource material already compiled, and have identified the following areas for an orientation: 1) the Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust, 2) roles and responsibilities, 3) conference survival, 4) conference policies and procedures, and 5) elections, among others. We encourage you to provide any input you have on improving the orientation process. We look at orientation as a work in progress, and if we are unable to incorporate your input into our plans prior to the 1997 World Service Conference, we will address it during the 1997/98 conference year.

## **World Convention Corporation**

WCC asked WSC Policy to review an elections issue. When someone stands for a position which he or she will not enter until later in that conference year, when does this person need to meet the clean-time requirements for the position: when elected, or at the time of stepping into the position? Our committee is recommending the person have the required clean time at the time of election. Our reasoning is based on the belief that, when reviewing qualifications needed for a position, we can only make decisions on those qualifications that an individual possesses now, not ones anticipated for the future.

Although WCC's election question was largely based on someone entering a position months after being elected, were the conference to agree with this line of reasoning, it would also impact other elections. Current policy for other conference-elected positions is that the person needs to meet the clean-time requirements when he or she steps into the position, which is at the close of the conference. In the interest of consistency, we would also recommend this be changed to require the specific amount of clean time when the election is held.

## **Mississippi letter**

The WSC Policy Committee was asked at WSC'96 to look at the issue of absentee voting and report back at WSC'97. The question posed was whether a region unable to send a representative to the World Service Conference might be able to vote through a proxy or absentee system. The Mississippi letter asserted that it was unfair that only those regions with the money to send their representatives to the WSC are able to participate in the WSC decision-making process, and asked that this matter be addressed. WSC Policy is sympathetic to the plight of many regions throughout our worldwide fellowship that are unable to attend the World Service Conference due to financial constraints, and we look forward to a system of participation that more equitably accommodates those without the financial means to do so. We do not believe, however, that absentee voting is the solution.

WSC Policy sees a proxy or absentee voting system as an issue that speaks to the common understanding of participation at the conference. The conference has set precedent on different types of participation, from being able to speak only in a committee of the whole to being able to speak during any session and vote. There also exist levels of participation in between these two. There is, however, nothing in our structure that speaks to a vote being pre-cast with the casting body's representative not present at the event. We believe this is more than an issue of policy mechanics, but one that begs the question, "What is participation?" As we currently understand the World Service Conference as an event, a vote is but one aspect of participation and decision making; to separate voting out as its own element is to remove a vital part of our decision-making process as described in the Sixth Concept.

The only part of the conference during which we could even consider an absentee ballot system is in old business, when many of the participating regions will be coming with their votes in hand. This is not practiced universally, however, and even if it were, the conference has not designated a different process for the old business session; participation is a recognized component. Therefore we could not recommend its use even in the old business session.

We recognize the disadvantage regions with smaller financial resources face; at this point, however, we can only recommend the following: 1) the Transition Group address full funding for all world service participants (including regional representatives) to world service events; 2) regions use the *Conference Report* to voice their views and concerns, so that conference participants may consider them; and 3) regions continue supporting each other through multiregional forums, so that those regions unable to attend the WSC have some place where their concerns are heard and included in the discussions of the World Service Conference.

Again, we hope the conference continues to seek solutions to the problem of unequal participation. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter.

## **Other activities**

We have finished our work for the WSC Literature Committee on its internal guidelines, and will submit that work to the WSCLC after our February meeting.

We followed up on the World Services Translation Committee's previous request for assistance with its guidelines. Its chairperson graciously declined, informing us that the need no longer existed.

Our committee's work on the conference and elections procedures is complete and has been submitted to the WSC Administrative Committee.

As always, should you have any questions or input on any of our work, we invite you to contact the WSC Policy Committee in care of Jeff Gershoff at the World Service Office. Thank you for your support and interest during this past year.

*Mary Chant-Valentine, Chairperson  
Lib Edmonds, Vice Chairperson*