

Model Four: Material and Spiritual Cost

This fourth model was based on the belief that the material and spiritual cost of maintaining a worldwide structure cannot be sustained by the fellowship over the long term. Materially, the responsibility of attempting to serve a growing global fellowship has already begun to outstrip the fellowship's collective financial resources. The expenses associated with the annual meeting (as well as its administrative support throughout the year), along with the expenses of maintaining international branches of the World Service Office, deplete whatever resources are provided by literature proceeds. There is no reason to believe that this financial situation will improve. In fact, it seems reasonable to assume that it will only continue to worsen as our fellowship comes of age in other parts of the world.

The Spiritual Cost

The spiritual cost of a worldwide structure may prove even more potentially destructive than the material. Although the N.A. program is universal, cultural and social differences will not allow for effective worldwide decision-making without diverting us, collectively, from our primary purpose. That cultural differences and expectations exist between us is undeniable. Unfortunately, it may be that the time needed for each of us to comprehend and overcome such differences will prove counterproductive in the end. We may, in fact, spend so much time attempting to create ways for us to simply work together that our shared responsibility to carry the message – mandated by our Fifth Tradition – may well be lost as we struggle to simply find mutually agreeable ways to make collective decisions. Indeed, some members feel that we have already arrived at this roadblock at the world level, and that the situation is worsening.

"Universalism" and Homogeneity" Diluting Our Message

Another grave concern related to these difficulties with finding a mutually agreeable way to proceed is the fact that, in order for a worldwide service structure to produce literature and service materials relevant to our entire membership, such materials would have to be so "generic" as to effectively dilute any real message or value they might otherwise have offered to individual addicts. We all believe that the fundamentals and principles of our recovery are the same throughout the world. Even so, because of the growing cultural differences among us, the focus of world services would, in its attempt to be everything for everyone, be mandated to increasing homogeneity. Such "universalism" might well result in the potential loss of local experiences, interpretation, and application in our literature and service materials. Our program needs to be expressed in each community's local language, relating local experience, to be most effective. The identification process and empathy so necessary to our recovery from addiction, which can only derive from addicts sharing their own experiences with each other in their own language and within shared cultural limits and expectations, could well be lost.

Structural Problems: Taking Responsibility and Supporting Decisions

Our attempt to maintain a unified world structure also contains structural problems that impact our system's overall practicality as well. If, as some members have argued, the groups are already too far removed from the decision-making process at the world level to feel responsible for upholding the decisions it produces, then how will they be able to understand or take responsibility for their services if they become even further removed by the proposed new layer of bureaucracy? Moreover, such a feeling of separation from the decision making process may also further alienate them from the actual meaning and application of decisions which are made. Such alienation can only mean that members and groups will become increasingly unwilling to support any such decisions either materially or spiritually.

Promoting Local Responsibility

Of course, the implication of this argument suggests that continental autonomy will promote local responsibility. It certainly seems logical to suggest that, when members are better able to see the importance of their role in a decision making process that directly affects them, they will then feel more responsible for supporting the decisions they feel themselves to have had a clear hand in deciding. Unfortunately, our collective experience at the regional and area levels may seem to belie this argument to some extent. Nevertheless, which makes better sense? To believe that members will be more willing to support a local decision making body in which they have direct participatory rights? Or to create a service body three times removed from the groups whose decisions may seem only distantly relevant to more localized issues and concerns?

N.A.'s Intellectual Properties and the United States Service Conference

In order to protect our fellowship's collective intellectual properties, their copyrights must be held by a legal entity. In our fellowship, that means a legal entity that is directly responsible to a service body. Registering and protecting copyrighted material in every

country around the world is extremely costly. The United States N.A. community represents 85 to 90% of our fellowship's groups, areas, and regions, and, at least for the present time, would be the logical choice as the copyright holder to protect our fellowship's assets. Not only does the US currently represent the bulk of our world service donations, but they also have the most experience within our fellowship of protecting its intellectual properties. On behalf of the worldwide fellowship, the conference serving the US fellowship would therefore act as the senior conference. Thus, in addition to its responsibilities to the US regions, it would hold:

- the authority to grant permission to print and distribute all existing fellowship approved literature and future translations of that literature.
- the authority to approve for publication all translations of existing fellowship approved literature.
- the responsibility to serve the groups not already served by an existing conference.

Many of the details about literature production and service offices would need to be left to future decisions by the individual conferences. Their decisions could then be worked out with the US conference and US board.