

Special Workers

March 13, 2014

I walked into Narcotics Anonymous for one reason; I thought you might be able to help me with my drug problem. What I received in addition to freedom from active addiction has been beyond belief. I have found the “new way to live” as described in our Fifth Tradition. It’s bizarre how I was looking for one thing and got something so much bigger. We all need to take this notion and use it in consideration of our Eighth Tradition. The Tradition tells us that, “our service centers may employ special workers”ⁱ, after warning us that “Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional.”ⁱⁱ Has our primary service center, the World Service Office (WSO), changed the role of special worker, losing sight of the idea that they are suppose to, “work within our Traditions and are directly responsible always to those they serve, to the fellowship.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Before moving into the explanation of this letter, a couple of things need clarification. This letter is not about what the WSO special workers are doing. This is not a witch hunt demanding that the World Board members (WB’s) be burned at the stake. It’s got nothing to do with how our Service Structure was constructed or the processes currently in use by the World Service Conference (WSC) every two years. It’s about our roll as NA members, or more precisely it’s about our obligation to ensure this program remains viable for future generations. Additionally, it’s critically important to remember a very profound statement from our Basic Text, “If a solution isn’t practical, it isn’t spiritual.”^{iv} Perhaps we have somehow negotiated away our responsibility to the Twelve Traditions. Maybe we forgot, “They are the guidelines that keep our fellowship alive and free.”^v There is one thing we need to remember for certain. “Our Traditions protect us from the internal and external forces which could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together. It is only through understanding and application that they work.”^{vi}

The way I understand the Eighth Tradition is very simple, our service centers may need to hire people to do things that we have directed them to do. Narcotics Anonymous is a Spiritual program; it is not a, “Charitable Organization doing business as World Service Office Incorporated”^{vii} as reported to the State of California, and it’s not a “501 (c) (3) not for profit Corporation known as NAWS to the United States Internal Revenue Service.”^{viii} Our primary service center – The WSO – is a business that we set up to serve the fellowship in fulfilling its goal of more successfully carrying the spiritual message of Narcotics Anonymous. The primary purpose of most businesses is to make money; we decided that our principal purpose was to serve the needs of the fellowship. What are those needs and what is the current process in serving those needs? Who has the role of establishing those needs? Have the established procedures been approved by a vote of the fellowship, the WSC, or the corporate directors known as the WB’s? When did the fellowship decide that we needed to make 900% profit on the *Just for Today* book? When did we instruct our special workers to hire professional consultants? Why is it necessary to make close to \$1 Million a year on key tags and chips? Why do we have to decipher financial reports? Why is it impossible to get detailed financial reports - especially with cash involved - about our biggest event?

Any office that utilizes special workers, especially one that has close to 50, should have some type of Office Manager. The instructions about special workers found in our 8th Tradition declare that, “Such employees are directly responsible to a service committee. [And] As N.A. grows, the demand for these workers will grow. Special workers are necessary to insure efficiency in an ever-expanding fellowship.”^{ix} The efficiency described here would imply that we have established policy and practices for our special workers to follow, and the management of those practices is scrutinized and reported to a service committee. If the World Board is the entity that our special workers are responsible to, what type of reports are they requiring of the management of our service centers? What is the established procedure to move from a position on the World Board to becoming a special worker? Or in being a family member

of a special worker and on the World Board? Who, what, how and when is efficiency measured? Who measures the efficiency of the management? When was the last time we put together a search committee for an Office Manager, aka Executive Director? Where can we find the procedural manuals for our special workers? What are the job descriptions of our special workers? When our special workers hire professionals or make purchases on our behalf, who ensures that the possibilities of kick backs or corruption are not being circumvented? What is the policy for special workers handling cash at our world convention?

Over the 10 year period of 2006 to 2016 our special workers will have cost us over \$33 Million. When did we morph from having an office manager to having an Executive Director with an Assistant Executive Director? Why do both of these positions have personal assistants? I think the time has come for our Trusted Servants attending the WSC to start asking some tough questions, and demanding answers. If the answers do not meet with the same level of scrutiny we would require of our Group, Area or Regional practices then it's time to make some changes. How many Regions have had devastating experiences with their Regional Service Offices (RSO)? How many of those RSO disasters could we have prevented if the reports coming from our primary service center were more specific? How many executive directors of non-profit corporations would have been kept in their positions after managing to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars on a semi-annual event? Both of our directors not only kept their positions they got a raise and a bonus. Additionally, they both violated our 11th Tradition at this year's semi-annual event in Philadelphia^x.

If we painstakingly examine the warning in our Eighth Tradition, about how we should remain forever non professional, I think it will become obvious that somehow we've gone off course. Our special workers have become professional workers, doing things that not so long ago would have been considered service work. With annual salaries now over \$3.3 million for special workers, and the recent price increase to our literature, it makes me wonder if we have forgotten exactly who our most important members are. Our basic text says it perfectly, "Ideas from the past are often incomplete and unsatisfactory. Everything we know is subject to revision, especially what we know about the truth."^{xi} If we as members of this spiritual program insist of transparency and accountability at the local level, why do we not insist on it at every level? I have recently read that we were a fellowship that had an office, and that we're now an office that has a fellowship. Let's prove that wrong and demand that what we know about the truth, is in fact, the truth. Let's return to the time when our special workers were simply that, nothing more.

ⁱ Basic Text, The Twelve Traditions, 72.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., 73.

^{iv} Basic Text, We Do Recover, 90.

^v Ibid., The Twelve Traditions, 61.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} State of California Attorney General, [LINK](#) enter 953090596 in EIN search box

^{viii} Ibid., pick the latest year (currently 2011) tax return

^{ix} Basic Text, The Twelve Traditions, 73.

^x [HTTP://ARTICLES.PHILLY.COM/2013-09-01/NEWS/41644478_1_ADDICTS-CONVENTION-HALL-PRESCRIPTION-DRUG-ABUSE](http://articles.philly.com/2013-09-01/news/41644478_1_ADDICTS-CONVENTION-HALL-PRESCRIPTION-DRUG-ABUSE)

^{xi} Basic Text, Just For Today Living the Program, 94.