

Is There But One Ultimate Authority?

April 1, 2014

If you have been around the fellowship for any length of time you will more than likely recognize the madness in telling an addict what to do. Even trying to tell an addict that they don't have to do it exactly how they are told, suggesting that they can modify the demands, seems just as crazy. So why is the World Board (WB's) trying to use this approach with the Service System (SS) Project? Could it simply be because this has become the standard practice of NAWS Inc., or does it actually work? I remember something that worked fantastically, it was called involvement, or inclusion, something I recently heard described as being open participatory service. Involvement should begin long before the finished product is assembled.

I was told in October 2010, that World Services was looking into revamping our Service Structure. I had become disenfranchised - In the late 1990's - during the previous makeover on the NA Service Structure, and I knew I had some catching up to do. One of the first things I had to do was become acquainted with the new terminology and acronyms. The first acronym I had to learn was NAWS, a new terminology I'm still trying to learn about is consensus based decision making. It appears that this has been implemented, but yet to be defined. Regardless, it made me excited to think that perhaps I could make some type of small contribution. I began brain storming about what I would do to make things work better, to reduce expenses, improve services and increase involvement. When I came up with my first, genius idea I made my submission to the WB's through the use of e-mail, for the very first time. I was shocked when I quickly received an e-mail response to thank me for the suggestion. However, I was dismayed when I read on. The WB's or NAWS special worker, were not really looking for new ideas, what they were really wanting was feedback on how great their ideas were. I was mistaken in my belief that they wanted ideas on how to improve things, I failed to understand that they - The SS workgroup, NAWS Staff, and the WB's - had already done all the thinking, all I had to do was figure out how to follow their directions.

I believe this procedure of simply rejecting anything and everything that is not preordained by a workgroup, NAWS Staff, and the WB's is not working. In *NAWS News* (Sept 2008) they published the names of the ten members chosen for the SS workgroup, plus the WB's assigned to the project. While I was brushing up on my terminology I ran across another hum dinger, Human Resource Panel (HRP's), I mistakenly thought they were the people that blindly chose the members of the workgroups, through some mysterious grading process. My research was flawed; it appears that the WB's do the appointing, or in the case of two of these people it might be called the anointing. In the very same issue of *NAWS News* I previously mentioned, this was discovered, "In addition to the plans for each workgroup and project, we were able to approve the workgroup members for the remaining projects for this cycle." In looking over the names of the SS workgroup it appears that two of them did such outstanding work they wound up becoming WB's themselves at the World Service Conference (WSC) 2012. Has this become some type of stepping stone process of the WB's hand picking their replacements, or what exactly was the intention behind creating the HRP's? The first announcement about the formation of the SS workgroup came in that September issue of *NAWS News*. In the November issue of *NAWS News* it was announced that "The Service System Workgroup has also met twice" The 2008 WSC ended on May 3rd, the WB's selected their work group almost instantly, and the chosen people gathered together twice - someplace - to implement the "plans" - sometime - before the publication of the November *NAWS*

News. Should we suggest a change in the name of work group? Maybe we should call them the secret specialists, and define their purpose as being the entity that carries out the plans of the WB's.

The 2008 Conference Agenda Report (CAR) had a section titled, Our Service System. In looking through this section I noticed two interesting observations by the WB's that seem related. In one place they mention, "As part of the *PR Handbook* endeavor, we also put together an Area Planning Tool that was approved at the 2006 World Service Conference as well." And then in the very next paragraph, "The *PR Handbook* and the Area Planning Tool were both created in response to local needs, and we know in many cases that the implementation of these two new tools would fall into the "what's working" category." I would like to know the exact number where they claim "many cases." I would hope the numbers were dramatically more than the SS Project field testing, where they started with nine and wound up with seven test communities, with only six of the original sites testing the full scope of the local project. They then found the audacity to make this claim at the beginning of the Field Test Summary found in the 2014 CAR. "In some cases, however, having GSF meetings seemed to make service meetings more attractive to GSRs because there wasn't as much time taken up at the ASC or LSC with reading of group reports." And at the very end of that same Summary we learn more about the number of testers and that claim, "Eliminating group reports from the business meeting and having a GSF report to highlight the most important elements was also cited as an improvement by a couple of testers." So it looks to me like the WB's knew what their Service System plan was prior to the 2008 WSC. The "plan" seems to be an attempt to dismantle the remaining locations where the old fashioned sub-committee structure was in place and working. This is an assertion by the WB's taken directly from the WSC 2008 Conference Report, "we are stuck in old ways of thinking and appear unwilling to change." They back up the "plan" by laying out this claim about our current Service Structure in the August 2010 issue of *NAWS News*, "We have been using a service model designed in the 1980s whose effectiveness and lack of flexibility may have outlived itself."

I think that the effectiveness of the WB's telling us what to do is well demonstrated by the results of the SS Project. Their first two years really accomplished one thing, and that was a minor change in the Vision Statement. This is how they summarized their efforts regarding this in the 2012 CAR, "First, we have tweaked the language in general so that it is more clearly a vision statement for all NA services, not just for world services. Then we added a second bullet that speaks to the joy and spiritual growth that come from service." All of this was reportedly at the cost of only right around \$150,000. Then the next two years yielded substantial proposals & modified proposals and then more modification with some acronym letter juggling resulting in Eight Resolutions and Eight Straw Polls written in a fashion to continue the SS Problem, formerly known as project. Now here we are approaching WSC 2014 with three more soothing suggestions from the WB's, asking us "To agree in principle to move in the direction of a service system..." So far money seems to be no object in achieving the WB's "plan"; they have spent - reportedly - close to \$500,000. It now appears that we are the problem, and if we would simply sit up, pay attention and do as we're told everything will be all right. Well they have me sitting up paying attention and I don't like the "plan". Another part of their plan in the 2014 CAR plainly says, "NA World Services [NAWS] has funded all delegates to the past six Conferences, but this is something we simply can no longer afford to do." I think we have something more pressing that we can no longer afford, and that something is allowing the WB's to govern a fellowship that has but one ultimate authority.