

If not the Service System (SS), then what?

May 1, 2014

I have heard it said that, “you cannot fight something with nothing”, if the SS is not to your liking then what would you suggest? The process to offer alternatives has been eliminated from the current Service Structure.

The way I remember things before the establishment of the World Board (WB) in 1998 things worked a lot more openly. For one thing the reporting was regularly distributed, and had a name attached as to the author of the report. The *NA Way* was a recovery magazine not a propaganda tool, the *Newsline*, was a regularly published report about what was happening in NA, and the *Fellowship Report* was a standard publication that helped everyone stay informed about what was happening in our Service Structure.

Since the WB took the helm of all of our service efforts, information has been harder to obtain. This brings to mind an old saying, “Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand” The WB wants to simply tell us everything; it appears to me that they have no interest in involving us. Perhaps this is why very few members know how draconian the SS project really is or that the WB has so far spent \$500,000 (and wants to spend more) telling us what they want us to here. If more members knew these things the outcry would be even more deafening.

We are told that the SS is something that the NA fellowship asked for. When I did the research I found that it was from a motion made and seconded by WB members at the World Service Conference (WSC) in 2008. Motion #32, “To approve the Service System project plan for inclusion in the 2008–2010 Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. budget.” The NA Groups did not get a voice on this decision it was not published in the Conference Agenda Report (CAR). It has also been suggested that the motion arose out of responses to Issue Discussion Topics (IDT’s) that are selected at every WSC. In 2002 the process for selecting IDT’s was re-established by a motion from the WB. Motion #2; “To remove the selection of Issue Discussion Topics from future Conference Agenda Reports.” This insured that the IDT’s would be proposed, discussed and decided upon primarily by the WB at each WSC. In the 2008 CAR IDT essay the WB claimed, “Repeatedly over the course of these four years [back to when the WB began primarily deciding the IDT’s], we have heard that we need better communication, less duplication of efforts, more training, and more effective delegation, among many other responses. We need to find a way to make service more attractive, more accessible, and more supportive.” The WB continued on and made a very revealing proclamation. “We’re not suggesting that local service bodies should cease all but essential services for a years-long inventory process, but we are thinking that we need to reexamine our service structure in a broad sense. Perhaps some of our chronic problems mentioned above can be alleviated through restructuring local services in some way.” Therefore the “chronic problems” that have been plaguing our Service Structure since 1976 can be availed by implementing the following three Motions proposed by the WB at WSC 2014:

- ◆ Motion 4: To agree in principle to move in the direction of a service system that contains group support forums: discussion-oriented gatherings focused on the needs of the group.
- ◆ Motion 5: To agree in principle to move in the direction of a service system that contains local service conferences: strategic service-oriented planning conferences.
- ◆ Motion 6: To agree in principle to move in the direction of a service system that contains local service boards: a body overseen by the local service conference that administers the work prioritized by the LSC.

Additionally, the “chronic problems” can be significantly alleviated by implementing the following two Motions proposed by the WB at WSC 2014:

- ◆ Motion 2: To adopt the following as WSC policy: “Seating at the biennial meeting of the WSC is limited to one delegate per region.”
- ◆ Motion 3: To adopt the following as WSC policy: “The World Service Conference does not automatically fund attendance of delegates. Delegates from regions that are unable to fully fund themselves may request funding from the World Board.”
Note: Who do you suppose will qualify to receive this funding, and why?

After six years and \$500,000 this is what they have come up with. Wow, is a word that does not come to mind. What does come to mind is what did they spend \$500,000 on? Well I asked and I was told, “We are not able to provide a more detailed breakdown of the expenses related to the service system project. One important factor to consider is that we cannot assign expenses to an individual task in the way that would be needed to provide such a breakdown. For example we may travel to an event and hold a session related to the SSP, while also facilitating several others on different topics, making it impossible to determine which costs associated with the workshop are applicable to the project.” What? Accountability? I was given a single vague attempt at specific dollar amounts. From, “July 2010 to July 2011, \$146,348 was assigned as being the expenses for the 5 service system workshops in the US.” I then had to ask, “How on earth can 5 workshops average close to \$30,000.00 each?” The response to that question came with much more detail. “While we aren't able to provide a detailed breakdown for the cost for each of the service system workshops we can say in a general sense that the expense for an event of that type is somewhere close to \$20,000 to \$30,000. When considering the cost and possibly comparing it to something like a local convention it is important to consider that there is no registration fee charged for an event of this type, and no room block to offset the cost of the meeting space.” I can't find any information about where or when these “workshops” were held, or how many people attended from the fellowship. I did find a report about a “workshop” in Baltimore, Maryland from Oct. 29-31, 2010 on the New England Regional web site. The report identified as, “Present from the World Board and NA World Services (NAWS) are: Ron B (WB) from Australia, Piet (WB) from Sweden, Tonia (WB) from Greece, Craig (former WB, now SS Workgroup), from Philadelphia, Jane N (NAWS) Public Relations, from California, Irene (NAWS) from California.” The author of the report estimated that the attendance was, “maybe 75-100 people”. Therefore, registration for the Baltimore

“workshop” should have been \$300 per participant to “offset the cost of the meeting space.”

Here is my idea. Let's stash the next \$500,000 we think about spending on this project in the bank. Ask the fellowship for input on ways to develop a template on how every Area Service Committee (ASC) can implement an agenda that starts with a process that focuses on Group issues and concerns before moving into the tried and true protocol of today's ASC. After that segment of the ASC is over every Group Service Representative (GSR) that wants to take part stays, and every GSR that would rather not participate leaves, and they can all read about the proceedings when the minutes are distributed.

Another of the WB's assertions is that the “Professionals” – which I thought we were – can't find us, to refer their addict clients to us. Therefore, let's ask the fellowship for input on ways to develop a web site that would allow a “Professional” and us, a way to click on a map and get the contact information for NA, be it in Timbuktu or Katmandu. Then let's take the \$500,000 out of the bank and pay a professional - hopefully one of us - to produce such a web site and fund it for years and years.

Then we need to take back our Fellowship to insure this type of nonsense stops. We were a Fellowship that had an office; we've become an Office that has a fellowship. Why is the electronic version of our Basic Text sold by outside enterprises and costs over Eight Dollars? Why does it take almost every dollar passed on from every United States Group, Area and Region to pay three peoples salaries at the corporation? We need to move the office to a site that is not located in one of the highest rent locations in the country. We need to make ALL of our literature available at cost; our primary purpose does not seem to align with the purpose of the corporation. We need to go back to having our WSC run by Trusted Servants, which could be easily done by returning to the 1981 Green Service manual. Beginning in 2015 a reinvigorated WSC could be held someplace outside of the expensive Los Angeles vicinity. The flyer for next year's WSC could be distributed at this year's WSC, which will be the final one controlled by the corporation. This would solve all of the “chronic problems” mentioned in the 2008 WSC minutes by the WB, because it would be returning our Service Structure to the fellowship and the open participatory service structure could begin again.

When you are on the pro side you are half way to victory, especially when there is not a con side. This is why I began my letter with the following, “you cannot fight something with nothing”. I am proposing something to fight against the nothing that is the SS project.

Anonymous