

# Only With Vigilance

The Spiritual organization known as the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is a simple yet complex entity. The simple task is to provide a method for one addict to help another in regularly scheduled meetings. The complex task has become the management of a corporate structure that now consists of offices on three continents, with a multimillion dollar annual budget. The merging of two different philosophies, the spiritual with the corporate, if it needs to be merged at all, is something that requires intricate application of principles, and those principles should be spiritual not corporate. There is a built in resistance by NA members to anything that may seem critical of the existing corporate structure known as Narcotics Anonymous World Services (NAWS). However, if we expect Narcotics Anonymous to be available for future members, we should all open our minds and begin paying close attention to what's happening within this corporate structure. If we have to have a Corporation, how can we hold it accountable, how can we ensure that it does not ride on our name, and how can we guarantee that it sticks to only printing and distributing our literature. Corporations don't work Steps and corporate directors only have one responsibility, and that is to increase the corporation's profits, not to carry the message to the addict that still suffers, that's our primary purpose.

In 1998 our old corporate identity, the World Service Office Inc.'s (WSO) by-laws were amended by a vote of the World Service Conference (WSC) to change the legal name of the WSO to Narcotics Anonymous World Services Inc. The motions that brought about this change were written about in the Conference Agenda Report (CAR) by the WSO Board of Directors. Here are the two motions: "To approve the inclusion of the words '*Narcotics Anonymous*' in the name of the legal entity for the new World Board," and "To amend NA Intellectual Property Bulletin #1, *Internal Use of NA Intellectual Property*, by changing the name of the World Service Office, Inc. to Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc." How can we pretend to be following our Traditions and allow this to continue? Our Tradition on this is clear, we are instructed to not, "lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise." The creation of a corporation to produce and distribute our literature is the creation of a related facility. Here is what's in our Basic Text. "Our Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to preserve and protect our primary purpose. This Tradition is the basis for our policy of non-affiliation and is extremely important to the continuation and growth of Narcotics Anonymous." The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn us what may happen: "lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose". Currently, NAWS Inc. is perusing affiliations with outside enterprises under the guise of Public Relations work, when our Traditions tell us that our public relations policy should be based on attraction rather than promotion. The 6<sup>th</sup> Tradition goes on to warn us, "When we as a group waver from our primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery."

California State Laws are very logical with respect to corporate responsibilities. A Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation exists to serve any public or charitable purpose. The State Law is very clear about who can insure the corporation is living up to its responsibility. "The accounting books and records and minutes of proceedings of the members and the board and committees of the board shall be open to inspection upon the written demand on the corporation of any member at any reasonable time, for a purpose reasonably related to such person's interests as a member." However, there are no members of NAWS Inc., according to the "Restated Articles of Incorporation" filed with the California Secretary of State, on May 6, 1998: "Article VI – 4. The corporation has no members." How can this be possible? Did we create a related facility only to then allow it to not grant us membership privileges?

If we need to have a corporation then we must insure that it's going to be directly responsible to those it serves. Financial accountability should be at the top of that list. However, that is currently not the case. The following language in the 2008 CAT created a major change in financial accountability. "First, we are proposing a change to the publication date of the *NAWS Annual Report* (from September to the end of the year) so that we can include the figures from the end of the year audit as a regular practice. At the last two conferences, participants preferred delaying publication to include these figures. This revision would make an end of the year publication date standard practice." "Second, we are eliminating the Quarterly Report since we send out a financial snapshot in *NAWS News*." The WSC participants approved both of these changes in "New Business" May 2, 2008.

This is how it was published in the 2008 CAT:

***NA World Services, Inc., Annual Report***

The *NA World Services Annual Report* provides a summary of the activity of World Services for the prior fiscal year and includes the audited financial statement and all contributions received for that fiscal year. It is released around the end of the calendar year, as soon as possible after the audit is finalized. It is distributed to regions and conference participants.

This is the way it was described in the *2004 – 2006 Guide to World Services*:

***NA World Services, Inc. Annual Report***

The *NA World Services Annual Report* provides a summary of the activity of world services for the prior fiscal year and is released by the end of September. It is distributed to regions and conference participants.

***Quarterly Report***

This report is distributed to conference participants and contains financial and travel information.

A little over a month after the WSC a new set of corporate bylaws had been filed with the State. This became the new wording under: Section 9.04 Annual Report: "The Board shall cause an annual report to be sent to the Board members after the audit is performed and accepted by the board after the end of the Corporation's fiscal year." And this is the way it read before the change. "The Board shall cause an annual report to be sent to the Board members within one hundred twenty (120) days after the end of the Corporation's fiscal year." The reporting timeframe was completely eliminated through this action. The way it was worded in the 2008 CAT was not the way the wording was changed with the State.

On September 5, 2015 the NAWS Annual Report was posted on the web site for physical year 2014. Physical year 2014 was from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The Annual Report came out an entire year later than it would have without the change. NAWS Inc. had to get the WSC to approve the change so they could amend the corporate by laws that are required by the State: "ARTICLE 13. AMENDMENTS - The Board may adopt, amend or repeal the Articles of incorporation and Bylaws at any regular or special meeting, with the intention that such acts be taken in a manner consistent with the will of the WSC whenever expressed." The will of the WSC was not to delay the publication of the Annual Report by a full year. The will of the WSC was to believe what they were told, that the "revision would make an end of the year publication date standard practice." How can we make rational decisions about financial matters when we are given out dated information?

The Quarterly Reports that were stopped completely because they claimed the information was being provided in *NAWS News* was another misrepresentation of the facts. The November 2005 NAWS

*News* was the last issue to have contained any type of significant financial information, but no travel information was provided. Trusting a corporation is not the same as trusting an individual. The terminology about both of these proposed changes in the 2008 CAT were not signed by an individual. So who can we hold accountable for the dishonest way they were presented to the WSC, and how can we correct this troubling situation from negatively affecting us in the future?

Additionally, if NAWS Inc. is a California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation and registered with the United States Government as a tax exempt organization, why are we not up to date on filing our taxes? How can delaying our filing reduce the tax burden of a tax exempt organization? According to the California Attorney Generals web site the NAWS Inc. is currently 3 full years late.

When we show up to NA most of us have had enough of our own dishonesty and the dishonesty of those around us. It's refreshing to show up to meetings where our fellow members are practicing honesty, a Spiritual principle, which in turn helps us to become more honest with ourselves and others. If we have to have a corporation, then let's get honest about what we want from that corporation and how we want the corporation to be responsible to us. Let's insure that any changes to the corporate by-laws are presented honestly to the WSC, let's ensure that the election process for the Board of Directors of the corporation are held completely separate from the board itself, let's ensure that financial accountability is restored to a quarterly and annual basis, and above all else let's reclaim our primary purpose as a fellowship by remembering we keep what we have only with vigilance.