



No. 16 Nov./Dec.98

The Joys of Service?

(editors note: the following article was a report to the Detroit Metro Region from an ASR about a motion to withhold donations to World Services that the Region is currently considering)

Report To The Metro Detroit Region, Motion #08-05-98

To begin with, I believe that there are some very viable, and very necessary parts of our World Service structure. However, the parts that do not work, or that operate in a manner that is unaccountable, unethical, and unspiritual, REALLY don't seem to work, and I believe they need to be addressed by this body.

MSO Accounts

For quite a few years, the World Service Office, Inc. (WSO), now part of the collective known as Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (NAWS), has expressed, on many occasions, contempt toward the regional service offices that became quite common in larger areas. Our Michigan Service Office (MSO) is just such an office. At one point in time, there was an agreement in place between the MSO and the WSO regarding boundaries. When they incorporated, the MSO declared the state of Michigan as a boundary, which meant they could not do business outside of the state, and the WSO

could not encroach that boundary. Recently, the WSO changed its policy regarding such boundaries, and basically eliminated them. This policy change was never voted on by the Fellowship. What soon followed was an effort by the WSO to lure the larger accounts from the MSO, by underbidding the local office. One of the larger accounts the MSO lost in this process was the Michigan Corrections Department. To put it bluntly, this whole deal was a power-play by the WSO to increase profits by circumventing the discount they provided to the MSO, and going right to the purchaser. It also borders on infringement of the anti-trust laws of this country. And it worked. Our office lost a number of accounts this way.

Another reflection of the WSO's distaste for the local offices was the reduction of the bulk discount for large orders. Where it used to be at 35%, it is incrementally decreasing, and will cut off at 21%. A little math, and one would realize that this amounts to a tremendous hit for the MSO, and other offices to absorb. At the same time this policy went into effect, the payback time for accounts due dropped from 90 days to 30 days, and if the MSO didn't make that payment, they would've lost all discounts, all together.

To add insult to injury on this matter, the WSO showed no willingness to communicate or compromise with the MSO. Further, because it was a "business decision", this matter was not presented in the CAR, or voted on at any WSC.

NA Way

The NA Way magazine, a publication available for years from the WSO, is a rather obvious example of misspent funds, and very poor management. The following is quoted from a letter I received about this issue. It was written 01/28/97.:

"The 'NEW' N.A. Way.

"Throughout all this 'information' we got about the NA Way magazine, we never did get the financial information as to WHY the magazine was losing so much money. This got me thinking, and I thought 'what the hell, I'll call the office and ask', and back in December I did just that. Here is the information I was given:

- General & Admin costs \$7000 a month
- Postage \$2500 a month
- Manufacturing (printing and binding) \$3200 a month
- Editing \$625 a month
- Circulation Management \$2500 a month

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$15,825 a month

That comes out to \$189,900 a year. There are about 5,000 paid subscriptions at \$15 a year, so that is \$75,000 a year in income. This all comes out to a loss of \$114,900 a year.

Now this information brings out a whole new set of questions.

OK with the direct costs--when postage, manufacturing, and editing of the magazine is considered, the total expense becomes \$75,900 a year. This with the income then becomes a \$900 a year loss for the magazine. So the main losses in the magazine are the other two indirect costs, let's take a look at them:

Circulation management -- \$2500 a month, \$30,000 a year. This is done by a business OUTSIDE of the WSO, it keeps track of the address changes and subscription renewals (I wonder, who owns this business?) Doesn't this seem a little high? And didn't we see just a couple years ago \$250,000 spent by the office for computer and software expenses, so WHY is this being shipped out of the office? A lot of us know what it takes to keep up a database, it ain't that much work. Hell I write database programs, once the information is punched in, the program does the rest.

General & Admin costs -- \$7000 a month, \$84,000 a year. This includes overhead and salaries for special workers. OK, what overhead? The magazine costs are already figured in. Electricity, taxes, water? Is the entire office's overhead in this figure? And why are overhead costs figured into and written off as NA Way expenses?

Salaries? OK, what do people do for these salaries? Well, I asked this too. The answer was that, "I answer the phone and to have to write letters sometimes." Tough job for \$40-\$50 grand a year. From the conversation I got the impression that the typesetting wasn't done there. I could be wring about this, but even if this is a part of the job, desktop publishing today makes this a snap. I put out a bimonthly newsletter that is about the same size, and it takes me about 5 hours every 2 months to put it together.

So the solution being offered to us that one 'new' publication be put out quarterly including the Newline, Conference Digest, and the NA Way in one lump, so all we are gaining is we're not going to put out 8 issues of the NA Way to paid subscribers.

We will be losing \$75,000 a year in income from these paid subscribers, the Gen. & Admin costs will not be reduced at all, in fact they will most likely increase for a 'bigger better' product, and it will be sent out free. Sounds like a savings to me.

The NA Way magazine itself has nothing wrong financially with it. The problem is in the mismanagement of it, and that won't change with a 'new' magazine."

End quoted material.

The bottom line is, with the new NA Way, NAWS has set themselves up to dig an even deeper financial hole with our monies, for a publication which has become a lot more politically-oriented, and less concerned about recovery or fellowship submissions.

Conference Agenda Report Motions

This is an area which illustrates the growing divide between the local and world services. Almost every motion, and every idea, which is given serious consideration, comes from the World. It was not a region that created or moved to implement the new structure. The fellowship did not ask for it. Rather, it was "given" to them by the world. Most regional motions are dead before they even come to the floor, if they even make the Conference Agenda Report (CAR) at all. The process seems to have become too isolated, too elitist, and too legalistic, which in turn has turned off most of the ordinary members from participating. This typical modus operandi of NAWS is inconsistent with principle of equality, as presented in Tradition Twelve.

Currently, the CAR is made available 90 days before the conference. This gives each region/area/group almost no time to effectively workshop, digest, and return with informed opinions about the variety of issues on the table. The current system is set up in such a way that makes informed group conscience impossible. It creates a situation where a very select few, at the conference, are making the decisions that will affect the fellowship as a whole. That is not the way our structure was ever intended to work. The regions' lone voice of direction towards the body that is supposed to be subservient to them, NAWS, is becoming quieter with each passing year. NAWS is becoming less and less the group-conscience directed arm of the fellowship, and more and more controlling, and corporate-minded. Their accountability to those they serve is waning.

Basic Text Pricing

In 1982, our Basic Text was approved by the fellowship through the WSC. The WSO was instructed to produce a hardcover by September of that year. The price of the book was established at \$8.00 until the WSO "gets on its feet." Then it would be lowered, perhaps to \$4.50 or less. In 1998, this promise long since broken, our Basic Text has only gone up in price, in spite of a printing and overhead costs that are still well under \$2.00 per copy.

Our world service structure has come to rely on quite a bit of its funding from literature sales, and the profits contained therein. As a result, because almost every group or area orders lit., they no longer had to rely on the fellowship as much for donations. Over the years, this has served to erode away NAWS' accountability to those they allegedly serve. They reneged on a promise to make the book available at a more affordable price. And it isn't even necessary to rely on all these sources. Alcoholics Anonymous has not only survived, but thrived, for years, on member donations alone. The price of their Big Book, off the table at most meetings, and out the door at their GSO, is still around \$4.50-\$5.00 each. Such actions would require NAWS to show more accountability, both financially and spiritually, than they currently do. It would also give the regions a lot more consideration from the world, and re-establish the theory of the "power of the purse" which has been long absent from Narcotics Anonymous, with very questionable results.

Jimmy Kinnon's Archives

In March of 1997, the WSO purchased the archived of Jimmy Kinnon, who has been known around the fellowship as one of the founder's of NA, but had never been recognized as such by the servants on the world level.

They were acquired from Betty, Jimmy's widow, for a price upwards of \$50,000, and other terms which were secured in a non-disclosure agreement. There are, in my mind, three major problems with the way this was handled.

(1) Betty Kinnon had offered the fellowship the very same archives at no charge, years earlier. Her only stipulation was that her husband be acknowledged as one of the founders of NA. The WSO refused this offer, for whatever reasons. In 1997, when the World Service Office got them, they paid the \$50,000, and a sidebar in a subsequent NA Way read as follows:

"Who was Jimmy K?

"Together with Doris C, Guildia K, Paul R, Steve R, and others, Jimmy K founded Narcotics Anonymous in Southern California... Jimmy is a key figure in NA's history for several reasons. He wrote several portions of the Little White Booklet, the most famous of which is the 'End of the Road' section. He designed the NA logo (later modified by the WSC). He served as volunteer office manager of the WSO from the time it began to 1983."

Basically, they came out and acknowledged him as a founder, which they refused to do for so many years prior. Which also kind of fills in a couple of the holes in the "non-disclosure agreement" with his widow.

In other words, the office spent \$50,000 of our money, unnecessarily, when they could have had the same archives for free, AND they ended up giving Jimmy credit anyway. It was completely wasteful and irresponsible.

(2) The fellowship, in any form, never approved the expenditure. The money allegedly came out of a travel/slush fund for emergencies. The explanation given for the immediate purchase, without WSC or fellowship consultation, was there was another bidder, and the office had to act immediately, or they would lose the chance to acquire the archives. This allowed them to use the "emergency funds" without needing to secure the proper permission. The identity, or even the existence, of this "other bidder" has never been verified, nor has the WSO ever expanded on their explanation. Whether this is entirely true or not, such behind-the-scenes moves, and backroom dealings, while typical, seem to work against the unity of Tradition One.

(3) \$50,000 of our money was used, without permission to purchase the archives, but for any one of us too see them, we will now have to pay an additional \$25-\$27 a pop to get the new coffee table book. This kind of "double-dipping" is nothing short of disheartening, and disgusting.

Translations

A common argument against lowering the price of the Basic Text has been that some of the proceeds help to fund the translation efforts of our literature. Here is a brief anecdote about how well the WSO has handled translations:

Within the last eight to ten years, a decision was made to translate our literature into Spanish. There are two regular types of Spanish. One, Castilian, is spoken primarily in the Spain. The other is a lot more common, and is used throughout Mexico, Latin America, and South America. A committee of willing addicts got together, who were bilingual, and fluent in the more common Spanish.

They went to work translating, at no charge. It was their service to the fellowship and to the countries from which they came. They were translating into the most common form of the language. When the committee had completed more than 2/3s of the work, the World Service Office stepped in, and with no formal explanation whatsoever, told them that their services were no longer needed. The WSO then scrapped the committee's work, and turned the project over to professional translators, who were paid thousands upon thousands of dollars to translate the whole book. The kicker of the whole thing is the professionals translated the book into Castilian Spanish, which is a dialect used by less than 10% of the Spanish-speaking world. It was a bonehead move that ended up costing the fellowship a boatload of money, for a much less useful product.

NAWS is an Outside Enterprise

Some of the things mentioned here did, and perhaps ought to, fall squarely on the shoulders of the WSO. However, since the recent restructuring, they are one of several alphabet conjunctions which fall under the NAWS umbrella. The WSO is not NA. The WSO was never intended to be NA, only an "NA-friendly" corporation to print and supply literature to the fellowship. While the WSO always had direct ties with us, they were still outside of NA, and they have always been a corporation. Now that they have reincorporated under the NAWS banner, this is no longer the case.

Thus, by its very nature, NAWS is an outside organization, as spoken about in Tradition Six, and any donation to them would clearly fall outside the spiritual intent of our Traditions.

Further, we as a fellowship have violated our Traditions by allowing this corporation to use the NA name. Narcotics Anonymous World Services' biggest component is the former World Service Office, which is a corporation outside of NA, whether it wears our name or not. And just as would never consider drafting a check to send our excess funds to General Motors, the same ought to apply here.

Internet/World Board

There was a workshop at the World Convention this year, about "NA and the Internet". The primary speakers at this event were comprised of various World Board members, representing themselves as such. This is a direct quote, verifiable by audio tape, of how one sitting Board member viewed the issue:

"Decisions regarding the Internet have basically been deferred to the office by the fellowship."

As an active member of this fellowship, I remember no such deferment taking place. It is not the Board's job, or the office's job, to decide what the fellowship wants. It is completely up to the fellowship, and the fellowship has never spoken on this issue. The World Board is involved in a dangerous situation. They have a history of doing and deciding whatever they believe is appropriate, with a cavalier attitude of, "Do what we want until we're told to stop." At the same time, they are not doing the things they were elected to do. Under the recent restructuring, the World Board was responsible for maintaining the various World-level subcommittees, and filling the positions from the Human Resources Panel. They have not done so. All their efforts to this point have centered entirely around the World Convention. They decided that this big-money event was far more worth their time than things like H&I, or Literature. As a result, (as of two weeks, ago, at least) we have no world P.I., Literature, H&I, or the rest. They are not living up to their responsibilities.

Precedence

Many of us do not always believe that what happens at the world-level effects us, or we don't understand why we should be interested. Out of apathy, or perhaps a greater focus on the distractions of daily life, we think "I'll just trust my trusted servants on this one". That sound great, and looks good on paper, but the reality is that the trusted-servant relationship is a two-way street, and it generally falls apart if there is little or no accountability. While a lot of positive things have come out of the WSO in our colorful history as a fellowship, and we have expressed a desire and a need for one, we need something more accountable, and less political. Many of our trusted servants and our special workers in Van Nuys, California, have served with integrity and spiritual principles. Unfortunately, there quite a few who haven't, and we currently have a system in place that allows abuses and financial irresponsibility to continue, without proper accountability.

A decision such as this, made by the Metro Detroit Region, would not be without precedence. The Greater New York Region, which faces a lot of the same issues we do because they are a large, relatively compact metropolitan region, and because they also have an active service office, passed a very similar motion last December.

Furthermore, Metro Detroit expressed a similar desire in our voting on last year's CAR. We were one of six regions whose conscience was in opposition of the formation of the shift to the new structure. Finally, we, as a region, voted down a reactionary motion last month that asked us TO donate money to the world. The logical progression would be to

take a stand, as a region, and back up our member's decision about this year's CAR, and our own conscience last month.

This Newsletter is being provided to any and all interested members of N.A. at COST please feel free to copy and give out as many of these as you like. We will be printing bi-monthly. Our cost is \$0.64 (includes postage) each so 1 yr, subscription would be \$3.84 (.64x6) Please send articles and newsletter money to:

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P O Box 447
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P.S. We also deal in the barter system if you would like to send supplies instead of \$, we need stamps, paper (#20 8 x 11), ink cartridges for Lexmark WinWriter 150C.

**WE MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER
POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR
OTHERS**

The 9th Step, just like all the other Steps and the Traditions as well, consists of many, many layers. As many, it seems, as there are recovering addicts. But the real benefit, in the end, is the same for all of us. It is a fact that, in its most superficial form most of us when we first encounter this step understand the 'direct amends' as a way to repair the wreckage of our past'.

When we first get clean we start to feel such deep guilt, shame and remorse for our diseased past behaviour that we just can't wait to go to our family and friends to try to convince them of just how tremendously sorry we are for the harm we have caused them.

New Attitudes...

We shall attempt to print all articles promoting a change in our intolerance and indifference towards spiritual principles. We seek any and all ideas for this publication to become a venue for change. All materials shall be printed in a spirit of anonymity. We encourage the use of humor and lampoon to stimulate thought and levity. Our hope is to find ways to transgress the perceived separation that exists amongst members of our society.

We hope that if we can just apologize sincerely enough our wives and husbands will take us back with open arms. Our friends and relatives will have to forgive us for lying and cheating and stealing from them, they will trust and love us again. once we pay back all the money we stole all will be forgotten, it will be like it never really happened, right? That is what this step is all about right? WRONG!

Actually the past is already gone and there is no way at all to ever get it back! If I stole from you 5 years ago there is nothing I can do about that particular act any more. Paying you back will not negate or erase the fact that I am a thief and that act of stealing actually took place. If you slept with your sponsees, husband or wife last year there is nothing that can be done to take that act back. The Law of Karma is

irrefutable, reciprocity rules, our every action has a reaction which affects those around us and the consequences of harmful acts can not be escaped. Those are life's terms.

The most important part of this step is not the making of the direct amends, but that no one is injured in the process. The only thing that we can actually amend is our PRESENT behaviour. Those we have harmed who are still a part of our daily lives will benefit by our NEW way of life. God will take care of bringing back into our lives anyone from our past who is supposed to be a part of our NEW lives.

The reason that we focus on the harm done to others by our insensible and uncaring selfish actions in steps 8 and 9 is so that we may increase our awareness of our unbreakable connection to all those around us. Our every action affects not only us but also many other people, known and unknown. The benefit of this step is eventual self forgiveness for our past wrongs as we continue to change our present behavior so that no one is harmed by our actions TODAY.

Step Nine is NOT about the past, none of our principles are. Contrary to popular belief this is not a "dress rehearsal",. This is real NOW!

N.A. AS SUCH OUGHT NEVER BE ORGANIZED; BUT WE MAY CREATE SERVICE BOARDS OR COMMITTEES DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THOSE THEY SERVE

Tradition Nine tells us about the very fine line which separates N.A. 'as such' and our service structure' and why this separation is necessary. It is a very interesting fact that many, many of our members are not aware of this very real distinction that exists

between 'N.A. as such' and the 'service boards or committees, which we have created in order to help us to better carry our message outside of our meetings.

We read it at every meeting so I am sure we all must know it by now that our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives.' And the N.A. meeting, of course, is where 2 or more addicts seeking recovery get together to share this program. What makes them 'N.A. meetings' is that they must follow and be guided by the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of N.A.; that process ought NEVER be organized. Anonymity, Unity and Autonomy must prevail at all times.

Outside of that we can and have created service boards or committees in order to help N.A., to serve the needs of the fellowship; like the committee that puts this newsletter together, the H & I Committee that makes presentations at Hospitals and Institutions, the Board of Directors that help to organize and put on our Regional Convention, etc, etc. In order for these boards or committees to operate efficiently they must be rigidly structured and organized. They must be guided by corporate bylaws, policy guidelines, Roberts Rules of Order, etc., Some of them have even formed themselves into corporations.

Boards, committees and corporations must have presidents, CEO's directors, officers etc.. Our Basic Text says:

"For the purpose of this Tradition, 'organized' means having management and control. on this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. Without this Tradition, our fellowship would be in opposition to spiritual principles. A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience is our ultimate authority."

Of course, it should go without saying, that these boards and committees that we have created should ideally have no power to rule, censor, decide or dictate. They exist solely to serve us, but they are not a part of N.A. and they must always and at all times be "directly responsible to those they serve".

The Text further states:

"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."

Wouldn't it be really something if N.A. was destroyed by an out of control board, or corporation running wild in self will and arrogance? You think it can't happen? Think again!

Sale!

Sale!

Sale!

Sale!

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