

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE 1989

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Our first order of business today will be to introduce the members of the Board to the other conference participants. I am Bob Rehmar (California) and I have served as Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for this past year. John Farrell (Pennsylvania) has served as Vice-Chairperson this past year and has also served on the Trustee Literature Committee. Bob Barrett (California) has been involved in the Trustee Literature Committee as has been Jack Bernstein (Southern California). Serving as members of the Trustee Internal/External Committee were Greg Pierce (Georgia), Kim Johnson (New York), Mario Tesoriero (Australia) and Tom McCall (Hawaii). The members of the Trustee Policy & Structure/Training & Education Committee are Sally Evans (Southern California), Becky Meyer (Nevada), and Garth Popple (Australia). The Board members who are completing their terms this year are myself (5 years), Bob Barrett (23 years), Sally Evans (10 years) and John Farrell (5 years).

As we begin this, the Thirteenth World Service Conference of Narcotics Anonymous, we should take the time to reflect on our growth, and the progress which we have achieved in these few years. When the first meeting was held in 1976, there were fewer than three hundred meetings and the number of addicts recovering in N.A. was maybe four or five times that number. Today we number in the hundreds of thousands.

Think of that for a moment. Hundreds of thousands of drug addicts recovering from a common disease. A disease that for generations led only to jails, institutions and death. We meet here today as testimony to the miracle of N.A.; to the Higher Power that watches over us, the Steps and Traditions that are the frame work of recovery and the determination of each of us as recovering addicts to fight this deadly disease.

Let us not forget where we came from for that is why we meet here this week. We meet not so much for the ritual of an annual meeting, but to plan and work together so that the recovery which is possible in N.A. continues to be available for all of us and to addicts world wide. In years past, the insanity that is possible in all of us sometimes kept us apart and foiled our efforts to properly work together. Let us cast aside our fears, the prejudice we carry, the envy and jealousy, the false pride and power. Let us unite and work together for the good of N.A. and the still suffering addict.

This was an extremely busy year for the Board of Trustees. Three new members were added to the Board, three members were retired, and a fourth resigned. This represented a one third changeover of the Board membership. Whenever there is a change of this size, the impact of the new members is felt as they are oriented and absorbed into Trustee activities. This happened at a turning point for the Board, a time when a major reorganization was to take place.

The Board of Trustees devoted more time to internal re-organization and to understanding our purpose than during any previous year. We began the year with a determination to put the Committee System, described in the Temporary Working Guide into practice. We have begun the use of this system and it has functioned reasonably well. The World Service Office also committed to support this effort by providing additional staffing and support services. The combination of these efforts by both the WSO and the Board of Trustees has moved us towards a more effective and valuable role as a resource to the fellowship.

These changes, as well as the substantial change in Board membership, provided the opportunity for us to re-evaluate how we function, what our relationship is to the Conference, and to the Conference Committees. As a result, there has been a clarification of what needs to be the focus of the Board of Trustees.

There is no doubt the Board of Trustees is responsible to the World Service Conference. There is equally no doubt that the three service branches, the Conference and its subcommittees, the Board of Directors of the World Service Office and the Board of Trustees should all work together to fulfill the needs and directives of the Conference at its annual meeting. Discussions within the Board have helped us understand that the Board of Trustees can function best when it has the latitude to perform its responsibility without restrictions, and as may be decided by the World Service Conference annual meeting.

This issue of adequately providing for the financial needs of the Trustees was addressed in a recent report to the Fellowship. In that article the point was raised that the current system places us in a competitive situation with respect to the needs and priorities of the World Service Conference Committees. The report included a sentence that stated, "This situation has affected the ability of the Trustees to accomplish its work." That statement was not intended to imply that the Administrative Committee has, at any time, denied funds to the Board of Trustees when funds were requested. The statement was intended to illustrate the problems of determining priorities in allocating funds to each committee when comingling of funds is used by the Conference and the Board of Trustees. This situation can be improved by more clearly separating the funds from the beginning rather than making priority determinations on a case by case basis.

One aspect of this discussion included the financial relationship of the Board of Trustees to the World Service Conference treasury. It has become clear that a slight change in the framework for financial management of the Trustees and the Conference is desirable. We have discussed several specific proposals. These included one which would have the Trustee's funds guaranteed by the WSO which was adopted at our meeting in November. Shortly thereafter we realized that we were not fully satisfied with this motion. In February we looked at a different motion which would have divided funds received by the WSC Treasurer by an established percentage: 70% going towards the WSC and its committees, and 30% going for Trustee activities. At our meeting on Sunday April 23rd, we again discussed this motion. We were likewise dissatisfied and felt that it was incomplete and premature. Therefore the Trustees are not prepared to present a motion regarding their funding at this Conference.

The whole financial issue however, needs to be brought out and discussed by the Conference. How the Trustees were originally included as part of the WSC budget in 1983, was more of a decision of convenience

rather than a well thought through action on the part of the participants. We believe it has more philosophical implications to the relationship and function of the Board than would appear on the surface. We are hopeful of coming here next year to present a proposal which resolves our financial status and our autonomy as a service arm of the WSC. Input on this matter will be received and reported during this next year.

An important event has occurred within the Joint Administrative Committee that was also carried over into discussions at our recent Board meetings. This concerns the need for N.A. to thoroughly consider overall goals and objectives of the fellowship and to establish priorities that are clear, simple statements of purpose for all branches of world services. We also had a long discussion concerning the purpose and priorities for the Board of Trustees. A set of general statements shown as Attachment One is included which outlines the work the Board currently believes is important.

A significant event occurring this year was a consensus among the Board to set priorities on which we should concentrate. There are several different projects the Board feels should be accomplished by the Trustees. The most important of these priorities is management of the final stages of development of the Traditions portion of It Works: How and Why. Throughout the last seven years the Trustees have had intermittent participation in this project, but we have never been given clear authority or responsibility for the generation of content. The Trustees have been used for their resource input and in various earlier drafts the Trustees were asked about Tradition violations in the material. The Trustees believe that they have a lot more to offer the fellowship through the completion of this work than only being asked to review it for any violations. Accordingly, the Trustees have proposed that the Conference assign responsibility and authority to the Trustees for this matter. (See Attachment Two for additional information).

At previous meetings of the World Service Conference an important statement has been frequently made concerning the purpose of the Board of Trustees that seems appropriate to re-state and re-confirm. The Trustees, it has been said, give representation at the World Service Conference to two groups of addicts who may not be here in the standard form of representation from a region. Those groups of addicts are the members and groups that exist in places where there is no regional service structure. The second group are those addicts who have not yet found recovery in Narcotics Anonymous; the still-suffering addict out on the street. It is important to remember this responsibility, as someone needs to carry that responsibility for looking beyond the local interests of regions that frequently results from the regional service system within the Conference.

We have been expected to look at issues from the perspective of a worldwide membership, rather than the interests of a single region. This broad perspective and responsibility has re-kindled the obvious deficiency apparent in Trustee involvement with the Fellowship in distant places. The Trustees have not been able to adequately participate, and share with addicts in remote cities and countries where N.A. is just beginning. If we are to fully perform this broad spiritual task, it will require us to have first hand knowledge of these new members, their cultures and unique problems. As we look ahead this need takes on greater importance.

During the year the Trustees have received many phone calls, engaged in many personal conversations and visited many meetings where members brought their concerns to individual Trustees. A common element in all of

these contacts has been the availability, or the lack of availability, concerning information on issues facing Narcotics Anonymous. Our experience has shown that members and groups who are isolated, or are not part of an effective communication system, are not fully informed or able to participate in N.A. We must strengthen our efforts in placing a higher priority on the distribution of information about our world services as well as discussions of issues confronting our fellowship. Wherever we find bottlenecks in the information distribution system, we find greater conflict and controversy.

Part of this communication need is the importance we should place on greater contact between the Trustees and the Fellowship at large. Although we cannot put Trustees on the road every weekend, we can make more efficient use of their time as they communicate with the fellowship at the grass roots level. Through this grass roots communication, the Trustees can be more useful in their discussions of spiritual principles, as well as in assisting with the utilization of these spiritual principles in every aspect of N.A. life.

This has been a major year of transition for the Trustees. It is very possible that the coming year will become a similar year of transition as new members are added to the Board and some retire from service. Great care should be exercised by the Conference in the selection of Trustees. The Trustees can provide dynamic spiritual leadership. The Board of Trustees should always be removed from the politics of N.A. that we see in various service committee controversies. Members who are capable of remaining free of those political conflicts are the ones who will best serve the Fellowship at large.

The Board of Trustees has begun a serious discussion of the issue of non-addict trustees, their role on the board, and their role in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The Temporary Working Guide provides for the existence of non-addict trustees and such people have served on the board in the past, however the Conference has not elected a non-addict to the BOT for a number of years. While some trustees question the advisability of non-addicts serving in this capacity, the Board of Trustees has started to consider the development of internal guidelines concerning the recruitment, screening, election, and level of involvement of non-addict trustees. Please see Attachment Three for further information. Also included with this attachment is a graph which illustrates the expiration of term of office for the present members of the Board of Trustees.

The Trustees were assigned by the Conference the responsibility to prepare an essay on the question of "What is Addiction?" This project was immediately tackled by the Board. Our proposal on this matter is enclosed as Attachment Four. It is the conclusion of the Board that this Article be presented at this time for consideration.

It has been a sincere honor to serve this year as a Trustee, particularly as Chairperson. I would like to thank the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship for having had the opportunity and the privilege to be of service.

Attachments

- 1: Listing of Actions to Strengthen and Focus the Efforts of the Trustees
- 2: A Proposal on the Traditions
- 3: Non-Addict Trustee Discussion/Questions
- 4: Draft Article on "What is Addiction?"

ATTACHMENT ONE

A LISTING OF ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN AND FOCUS THE EFFORTS OF THE TRUSTEES.

This Attachment contains a partial listing of the actions taken by the Board of Trustees this year that will help shape the focus of the Trustees and strengthen the Board as a working unit of World Services. Some of these actions are internal and address the practical management of the Board and its ability to operate successfully. (Note: These are taken from the February minutes.)

"That the BOT Literature Review Committee ask the WLC to have the opportunity to review and input the drafts of each Step prior to publication by the WLC."

"That the WSC assign the responsibility and authority to complete the development of the Traditions portion of It Works to the BOT."

"To set a schedule for communication among the members of each Trustee Committee. Included should be periodic contact between the BOT Committee Chairpersons and the BOT Chairperson. Also included should be at least bi-monthly contact with WSO staff. Provision should be made for written communications and distribution of reports and drafts of work in progress."

"That the Trustees change their working relationship with the WSC Committees by not automatically sending BOT members to attend meetings of the Conference Committees. However, the BOT Committee will work more directly with the officers of Conference Committees to help develop priorities and plans for their work and provide a resource for the committees to use. The Board of Trustees will set a schedule for interfacing with WSC Committee Chairpersons. This schedule should provide for meetings and/or phone calls with WSO staff and WSC Committee leadership. BOT Committee members should receive all communications from the WSC Committee Chairperson to their committee."

"That the BOT members (attending WSC Workshops) write a full report on the Conference meeting. This will be accommodated by Trustees who will attend the WSC workshops and be available for discussions and consultation, but will not participate as regular members of the Committee meetings."

"That the Board of Trustees report to the Conference that the Board of Trustees will continue to utilize their Standing Trustee Committees. On a trial basis for one year, the Board will change BOT meetings in order to

coincide with quarterly workshops; and the Board will change the way it interacts with the Conference Committees, before seeking to officially change the system from that which is described in the TWGSS or other Conference approved publications."

On The Guide to Service in N.A., it was decided, "1. That the BOT ask the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on the Service to have the opportunity to review and input on the drafts of each chapter of the Guide to Service in N.A. prior to its publication for the Fellowship generally. 2. Back-up Action: That the material be given to all members for their review, that the Board set a deadline for input from its members and that a series of Conference telephone calls in order to develop a consensus of the committee. The work being done by the BOT should not affect or delay the schedule of the Ad Hoc Committee."

ATTACHMENT TWO

A PROPOSAL ON THE TRADITIONS

At the February meeting of the Board of Trustees a thorough evaluation was given to the relationship of the Board of Trustees to the understanding of our Traditions and the project to produce a definitive publication on N.A.'s Traditions.

The Fellowship has always looked to the Trustees as having a particular responsibility concerning the Traditions of N.A. The Temporary Working Guide to Our Service Structure even contains this quote: "Although the primary aim of the Board is to ensure the maintenance of the Twelve Traditions, the Trustees also serve in many other capacities and have other responsibilities." This clearly assigns the Traditions as the primary focus of the Trustees.

However, the development of the Traditions publication is currently being done by a Conference Committee which is already overwhelmed by its work on the Steps and other major projects. Because of the long term association and experience in Tradition matters the Board has maintained, it seems this should change. The Trustees have always been sought as speakers for panels and workshops on the Traditions. The Conference continues to refer complex and controversial matters to the Trustees where understanding of the applicable Tradition is uncertain. And the letters and articles written by the Trustees have been relied upon in innumerable incidents as the basis for resolution of Traditions conflicts. And, if the Trustees only role in the completion of the Traditions publication is to review it at some later date for possible violations, we will have wasted the years of work and energy the fellowship has invested in the Trustees, to evolve their knowledge of the Traditions.

This discussion was shared in the recent March, 1989 Fellowship Report. In the report the Board gave notice of intention to propose a motion to assign responsibility for completion of the Traditions publication to the Board of Trustees. Accordingly, the following is proposed.

The World Service Conference hereby assigns responsibility to the Board of Trustees to manage and propose for Fellowship adoption, a publication commonly known as the Traditions Portion of *It Works: How and Why*.

The Trustees shall receive all of the input currently on file or in the records of the World Literature Committee pertaining to Traditions.

The input being developed by regional or area service committees as a result of assignments from the Chairperson of the World Literature Committee will have their material or input given to the Board of Trustees. The deadline already in place of October 31, 1989 will remain in effect so as to not delay the project.

The Board of Trustees should, by October 1990, develop and propose a Review Form Draft of the Traditions material as a review form publication. Sub-paragraphs a, b and c of Paragraph 9, Appendix C of the Approved Guidelines for the World Literature Committee shall be applicable in this review process. The guidance these paragraphs provide shall be utilized. However, where reference is made to the World Literature Committee in those

guidelines, the Board of Trustees shall be used as the responsible service committee.

Input received from the Fellowship concerning the review form draft will be considered and as appropriate, included by the Trustees in the development of an Approval Form of this publication. If the Trustees have completed this task by the opening of the Conference in 1992, they may propose the publication and be published as Approval Form literature in accordance with the provision of paragraph 10 (a, b, and c) of Appendix C--Guidelines of the World Literature Committee. The interpretation of the Guidelines will again reflect Board of Trustee responsibility rather than Literature Committee responsibility. At the World Service Conference in 1993 the Fellowship could then consider this publication for final Conference approval.

The Board of Trustee Literature Review Committee will exercise direct responsibility for the management of this project. They shall coordinate the working subcommittee of the Board using Trustees, past Trustees, non-Trustees (addicts), and other administrative and clerical assistance as may be appropriate. When the subcommittee is finished with draft material it will be reviewed by the full Board of Trustees for consideration.

The Trustees, individually, will not be expected to write the Traditions, any more than an individual member of the World Literature Committee would be expected to write similar material on work assigned to it. The Trustees, in completing this work, shall remain consistent to the operation and philosophy generally contained in the World Literature Guidelines for the development of new literature.

Through the adoption of this proposal, the Board of Trustees can provide for the Fellowship proper management and development of this invaluable tool for our Fellowship. It is anticipated that the time line contained in this proposal can be met and an excellent book will be developed.

Board of Trustees
Expiration of Terms of Office

1989	John F.	Bob B.	Sally E.	Bob R.
1990	Tom M.			
1991	Jack B.			
1992	Greg P.	Mario T.		
1993	Becky M.	Kim J.	Garth P.	

ATTACHMENT THREE
NON-ADDICT TRUSTEES
DISCUSSION/QUESTION

In our preliminary discussion, a number of questions have already arisen to which there are no facile answers. Some of the issues we are reviewing for instance are:

There are no real guidelines for non-addicts to consult about how to serve N.A.;

There are no stated qualifications for non-addicts trustees;
If we did have qualifications, how would we assess nominees?

Should non-addict nominees come from regions, the Bot, or a special search committee designed for that purpose?

Might it be more desirable to create a second type of trustee - perhaps called "non-addict advisors" to the board?

Would it be better to have non-addicts serve on trustee committees rather than on the Board itself?

Should the Conference declare a moratorium on non-addict nominations to the Board until guidelines are developed?

If a moratorium is declared by the Conference, would non-addicts be appointed to trustee committees in the interim?

How can we utilize non-addict trustees to improve our ability to serve the Fellowship?

How can we best accommodate our need to interact with and cooperate with professionals, other organizations, the media, and the general public?

How do we integrate those non-addicts who may be nominated and elected by this Conference?

What is addiction?

At the 1988 World Service Conference, the following motion was passed: "To request WSB to take on as a project the task of defining 'addiction' as it relates to N.A." The stated intent was to define addiction as drug addiction, and to clarify whether or not the word "drugs," as we use it, includes caffeine, nicotine and sugar.

What follows is an essay developed during the 1988-89 conference year by the Board of Trustees in response to that request.

The task of defining addiction has challenged physicians, judges, clergy, addicts, their families and the general public throughout history. There are as many potential definitions as there are groups with an interest in defining addiction. Some definitions would emphasize physiological dependence, some psychological dependence; some would focus on family dynamics, some on behavioral problems, and still others on morality. This list could be expanded at length, and N.A. could come up with its own definition and add it to the list. Fortunately, Tradition Ten* steers us away from such public debates. Clearly, debating such issues is not N.A.'s task. Our task is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

Still, defining addiction for ourselves is certainly important to the process of recovery. After all, in our First Step we admit powerlessness over it. That admission is the foundation upon which our recovery is built. So the question, "What is addiction?" is relevant indeed; the fellowship has a responsibility to consider it carefully.

It can be answered, at least in part, and we will attempt to do that here. But there is much about this question that we will not be able to answer in concrete terms. In those cases we will try to explain our position, and state why the issue does not lend itself to a clear definition.

This discussion will not include a restatement of our fellowship's broadest understanding of what addiction is. That may be found in the Basic Text, especially in the chapter "Who is an Addict?" Instead we will focus on a few difficult issues that the Board of Trustees has been asked to consider.

Is addiction a disease?

In many ways this is one of those questions about addiction that defies an answer. There is a vigorous public debate over the question of whether or not addiction is a disease. As we grow and find ourselves more squarely in the public eye, we must learn to measure our written statements carefully, and not take dogmatic stands we are not in the position to back up.

On the other hand, we are certainly not arguing here that N.A. literature should quit referring to addiction as a disease. It is our fellowship's collective experience and understanding that addiction is in fact a disease. We have no reason to challenge that perception now. It has served us well.

Our experience with addiction is this: When we accept that it is a disease over which we are powerless, such surrender provides a basis for recovery through the

* Tradition Ten: "Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy."

Twelve Steps. The numbers of N.A. members living in freedom from active addiction bear our position out pretty well.

So even though we as a fellowship are not in a position to argue what is or is not a disease in the strictest medical sense, we are fully confident that our use of the word "disease" in describing our condition is appropriate. Whether it is appropriate in a medical sense or in a metaphorical sense is not important. We'll leave that debate to others. It is only important for us that we realize we are powerless over our addiction, and that in Narcotics Anonymous we have the tools to treat it effectively.

And really, that's the key point: Professional people in fields like medicine, religion, psychiatry, law and law enforcement define addiction in terms that are appropriate to their areas of concern. So do we. Narcotics Anonymous defines addiction for the purpose of providing recovery from it. We treat addiction as a disease, because that makes sense to us and it works. We have no need to press the issue any farther than that.

Does "addiction" mean only drug addiction? What about other kinds of addiction?

It must be stated clearly that by the word "addiction" we do in fact mean "drug addiction." Our Third Tradition says, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." Clearly we mean "...a desire to stop using drugs."

As a fellowship we place much importance on the fact that we have shifted the focus of our steps off any specific drug and onto the addiction itself. We have done that by wording Step One "powerless over our addiction" rather than "powerless over drugs" or "powerless over narcotics." It is clear to most of us that any wording of Step One which named specific drugs--or drugs at all, for that matter--would have stated the principle with much less power for our purposes than our current wording does.

If we would attempt to broaden our focus beyond drug addiction to include other types of addiction, we believe we would seriously undermine our atmosphere of identification. The balance we are striving for is a delicate one. On the one hand we must understand our First Step well enough to keep our sharing at meetings focused on the disease of addiction, not on specific drugs. That way our focus is broad enough to include all drug addicts. That's why we have tried to agree on terms that adequately describe our disease and our recovery and yet are not drug-specific. On the other hand we must keep our focus specific enough to provide clear identification for our new members.

What about caffeine, nicotine and sugar?

N.A. is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. We state this clearly and unequivocally in our meetings and throughout our literature. At most of those meetings, however, coffee and cookies are served and members are smoking cigarettes. Caffeine and nicotine are being used. Some believe that sugar is a mood-altering drug. To many, this represents a grey area in our program. Some consider it a kind of hypocrisy.

To be quite frank, this problem does indeed represent a kind of grey area. It calls upon us again to rise to a higher level in our thinking about our program, not falling back on simplistic black-or-white dogmatic arguments. There is no black or white here. If there were, we would either say that caffeine, nicotine and sugar are not mood- or mind-altering (a claim we would be hard pressed to back up) or that some mood- or mind-altering drugs are okay for us to use. Neither of those statements is acceptable for us to make.

This issue challenges each of us to use common sense rather than expecting the ultimate answer from the Board of Trustees. We have no single statement which is adequate to address this perplexing issue, but we do have years of experience to draw from.

Since our inception as a fellowship, many of our members have been smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee and eating sugar. Of these members, those who work the steps and abide by the traditions recover. This cannot be said of members who, for example, smoke marijuana or drink alcohol or abuse prescription drugs.

So we as a fellowship do not address the issue of our members' use of caffeine, nicotine or sugar in any way. We leave those decisions to each individual member to work out. Our disease finds many avenues in which to express itself in ongoing recovery. These can be identified by working the steps, facing ourselves honestly, opening up completely with a sponsor, and relying on a Higher Power for the strength we lack. Whenever *anything* is producing unhappiness or dissatisfaction in our lives, we should use Twelve Steps to address it.

Afterward

This essay is intended to stimulate members' thinking and discussion about the nature of addiction. As members awaken spiritually and share with one another, the answers get woven into the fabric of the fellowship's conventional wisdom. Then just when our thinking begins to harden into dogma, another generation comes along to challenge us and keep our perspective fresh. Clear, simple truth withstands such tests.

We urge N.A. members to remain open-minded and flexible. It is important to look to our literature and our experienced members for guidance, but ultimately each member have the right to understand and apply this program in the way that works best for them.