

J O H N T.-----

 NORWOOD COURT HOTEL

 ROCHESTOWN, CORK,

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 The JANUARY 1992 issue of the N.A. NEWSLINE-VOL 7-#1 contains on pages 7 to 10 a lengthy statement asserting a large number of notions said to be about NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS and its supposed "relations" with something [UNDEFINED] called "THE COMMUNITY".

 The italicised heading is attributed to something called the "W.S.E. EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE". The nature and makeup of that particular committee is not disclosed either. We would be grateful to find out who these people are and what they are doing when they are not drafting statements in the name of N.A. that make a mockery of the whole spirit and message of our fellowship.

 If this "STATEMENT" is indeed "INTENDED TO STIMULATE THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION" then it has succeeded in doing so,-its only area of success. The semi-disclaimer at its start is disingenuous;- let whoever is plotting these dangerous [we would say suicidal] changes in the whole nature of NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS stand over their actions.

 To answer each and every one of the ridiculous statements that pepper the article would be an Augean task. Nonetheless we feel obliged to answer some of the more outrageous notions:-

 "OUR COMMUNITY RELATIONS ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FELLOWSHIP'S GROWTH AND SURVIVAL". What is the "COMMUNITY" referred to here and 34 [THIRTY FOUR!] other times in the course of the article? -Obviously NOT the Narcotics Anonymous community. The state perhaps? But which state? Which country? Somebody's local town, city, street, family? And what are the "RELATIONSHIPS" mentioned? Advertising? Contributions? Endorsements?

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Narcotics Anonymous needs "RELATIONSHIPS" with other "COMMUNITIES" like it needs holes in its head! We have sadly witnessed such "RELATIONSHIPS" subvert, pervert and undermine our fellowship, stunt its growth and threaten its survival. We have been forced to fight the importation into the fellowship of the conflicting philosophies and codewords of outside institutions, particularly the so-called "DRUGS AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT CENTERS" with their attendant psychological, political and religious coercion and their cultish mish-mashes of "THE TWELVE STEPS" [which twelve is never really specified]

"RELATIONSHIPS", whatever they may be, with "THE COMMUNITY", whatever it may be, are at best unnecessary and useless and at worst diluting of our own distinct and unique philosophy.

We are surprised, but also grateful, that the authors actually acknowledge that our primary is the carrying of the message to the addict who still suffers. We're very glad to hear it!

NOTE THOUGH:-WE carry the message, not anybody else outside N.A.

And the only message we carry is the Narcotics Anonymous message -not any other messages, however much they may appeal to the authors. And we carry our N.A. message "TO THE ADDICT WHO STILL SUFFERS"-not to his or her family, employer, employees or to the "COMMUNITY".

We provide "PUBLIC INFORMATION" but aimed solely at the addict.

The statement goes on to assert:--"OUR MEMBERS WILL INVITE FRIENDS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND CO-WORKERS WHO SEEK RECOVERY TO ATTEND OUR MEETINGS". Only if they have a desire to stop using, we hope.

N.A. is for addicts and the recovery we seek is N.A. recovery.

We should not have to point that out but we feel obliged to do so.

It is both inaccurate and defeatist to state that "MOST ADDICTS WILL ONLY HEAR OF US THROUGH MEDIA REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS, PROFESSIONAL REFERRAL, OR DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE". In our experience nearly all our newcomers hear of us through our own posters, flyers and meeting lists or directions given by members of N.A. [i.e. ourselves]. Perhaps the authors need to work on this area themselves and cease relying on the outsiders mentioned or on "MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE". Incidentally, is this "COMMUNITY AT LARGE" different from "THE COMMUNITY" mentioned earlier?

Next comes the extraordinary assertion that "TO FULFILL OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE, WE WILL NEED TO SEEK GOOD, COOPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY AROUND US. WE CAN'T FULFILL THAT PURPOSE ON OUR OWN". Speak for yourselves, whoever or whatever you are, because you do not and cannot speak for us! We need nothing of what you are seeking and we are fulfilling our primary purpose quite well without it!

In our N.A. P.I. work we NEVER acknowledge that we are "PART OF" anything called "THE COMMUNITY AROUND US". We are autonomous, except in matters affecting other N.A. groups or N.A. as a whole.

That is our group's only community,-the community of N.A.

Individual members may consider themselves to be members of other communities if they so wish, but we as a group have no opinion on that.

For example, some members might consider themselves to belong to the farming community or the community of the unemployed or the poor or the rich or the single or the married or the bearded or the clean-shaven. What members choose to hold in common outside N.A. is their own business.

Next, at last, comes what may be a definition of what the authors mean by "COMMUNITY";-"A MUCH GREATER ENDEAVOR,-HUMAN SOCIETY".

We could write a book on the question of what "HUMAN SOCIETY" might be, if such a thing really exists at all. But that would be outside our purpose as a Narcotics Anonymous group.

Why introduce such contentious philosophical concepts here? At best it is irrelevant and a distraction; but in fact we strongly suspect that it is part of a new and sinister family of code-words and code-phrases being infiltrated into Narcotics Anonymous by those whose hearts lie elsewhere.

"HUMAN SOCIETY" is a concept which is of no concern whatsoever to N.A. as a fellowship. It is yet another outside issue on which we have no opinion. Please stop trying to suck us into such public controversies.

If "COMMUNITY RELATIONS" are any indicator of N.A. spiritual condition they are a bad sign. Are we to take it that the authors cannot see themselves in the "PROPER SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE" of Narcotics Anonymous and instead feel obliged to "RELATE" to some outside "COMMUNITY"? If so let them come clean and stop calling themselves an N.A. committee.

Believing that they can somehow improve the fellowship's spiritual condition through "PUBLIC RELATIONS" represents the height of arrogance, not humility. To whom, apart from the suffering addict, do the authors want to "TEACH" N.A. and why?

Just when did N.A. become a "SOCIAL MOVEMENT"? N.A. is not a "SOCIAL MOVEMENT" by any stretch of the imagination.

Narcotics Anonymous is NOT out to change society. That is just another outside enterprise. Do we have to point out that the FIFTH, SIXTH and TENTH traditions are specifically designed to prevent us ever becoming "A SOCIAL MOVEMENT"?

Are the authors inviting us, as a fellowship, as groups and as individual addicts, to join them in some grotesque ongoing ritual suicide? If so our reply is a loud and resounding NO! Thanks, but no thanks! We will never join you in self-destruction, or sign your suicide pact. Our N.A. traditions are NOT negotiable!

What exactly is N.A. supposed to learn "FROM THE SOCIETY AROUND US"? As individual addicts we may each learn whatever we wish but as a fellowship we have nothing to learn from any outside "SOCIETY", however much "AROUND US" it may be.

Who are the "OTHERS" who are said to "HAVE DONE MANY OF THE SAME KINDS OF THINGS WE SEEK TO DO"? We know of no-one who has ever attempted to do what we do in Narcotics Anonymous. We do know of several institutions, organisations and corporations who have tried and failed to steal the twelve steps and take over N.A. and who still seek to hijack our meetings for their own ends of money, power, prestige and social control and conformity.

These parasites constantly seek to blur the total distinction between our Narcotics Anonymous program and their own "PROGRAMS".

But for all their efforts they manage only a negligible "success rate" and none at all by their own unaided efforts.

In a strange way though the authors may be right about one thing -we can indeed learn something from those outsiders,-we can learn what NOT to do! Their recurring failures are examples to us.

What are "THE PROBLEMS RELATED TO ADDICTION" that "REQUIRE OUTSIDE
HELP" and what form of "OUTSIDE HELP" do the authors have in mind?

Narcotics Anonymous is not "BUT ONE TOOL FOR ADDRESSING ADDICTION".

N.A. is no kind of a "TOOL" at all. N.A. is a fellowship which
addresses ADDICTS, not addiction, in so far as it addresses any-
thing at all. We are not interested in "THE PROBLEMS RELATED TO
ADDICTION". We are interested in the ADDICT and nothing else.

Narcotics Anonymous has no social agenda and can never have one.

It may be true that "IN MANY COMMUNITIES, A VARIETY OF ORGANISATIONS
OFFER HELP TO ADDICTS SEEKING RECOVERY", but so what? The authors
do not enquire any further into the nature of the "HELP" being
offered. Rest assured it is NOT Narcotics Anonymous recovery!

We note that the "COMMUNITIES" are here referred to in the plural
-presumably more than one community is now implied, but we are
still left in the dark as to what exactly these "COMMUNITIES" are.

Let us remind the authors that Narcotics Anonymous is NOT in
fact an "ORGANISATION" at all,[C.F.-Tradition Nine],despite the
recent proliferation of committees, sub-committees, ad-hoc
committees and the myriad other infestations of bureaucracy.

As stated in the N.A. leaflet "Who, what, how and why" many of
us did indeed seek "-help through medicine, religion and
psychiatry-",but- "None of these methods was sufficient for us."

Perhaps the experiences of the article"s authors are different:-

Perhaps they personally have found what they consider to be better
alternatives to Narcotics Anonymous. If so let them say so.

We will not criticise such choices here but we do feel that
the N.A. NEWSLINE is hardly the place for their dismal critique
of our fellowship,-which for us remains our unique lifeline.

We addicts are the sitting ducks of "SOCIETY",-the perfect targets for every passing fad in social control, coercion and brain-washing. We are a ready-made population of guinea-pigs for each new generation of "Mad Scientists" to experiment on.

They have tried imprisonment, torture, mutilation and execution out on us in the past, and sometimes still in the present. But nowadays their methods of control and dominance are usually more subtle. "Jails, institutions and death" can still be our end, but Narcotics Anonymous can save us from that appalling triangle.

The deadliest of that deadly trio may now be the institutions.

What happens when the forces of social, religious and familial control pursue the addict out of the institutions and into the very heart of Narcotics Anonymous,-into our groups" meetings?

N.A. then becomes itself an institution and ceases to be N.A.

If N.A. does become institutionalised, through increasing its bureaucracy and the transformation of our N.A. meetings into "aftercare" groups, it will not even be necessary for outside institutions to take us over. We will have done the job for them,-through our inaction, lack of vigilance and a misplaced "tolerance" that is not real tolerance at all, but complacency, laziness and cowardice.

The "RECOVERY" being sought by people in a variety of outside organisations is NOT and never can be N.A. recovery; and N.A. recovery is the only kind of recovery we are interested in here.

Those "OTHER" organisations pressurise addicts into seeking after forms of "RECOVERY" that frequently do not involve abstinence from all drugs. For example;-despite being the only drug actually mentioned by name in our literature, ALCOHOL is often not seen as a drug at all by such "OTHER" organisations and the clear stance of Narcotics Anonymous on alcohol is fudged, glossed over, ignored

They encourage, and sometimes openly force, addicts to use drugs p8
such as thiorazine and an array of anti-depressants, denying that
they are mood-altering in any way and encouraging their deluded
"patients" to do the same at N.A. meetings, which of course turns
the meetings into mere charades,-which is exactly what they want.

Next comes a sentence that seems to be a stark illustration of
the authors' state of mind,-"WE DON'T PRETEND TO HAVE CORNERED
THE RECOVERY MARKET". It is hard to believe that an N.A.
committee could issue such a statement in the N.A. NEWSLINE.

Again we are forced to point out what should be obvious;-
Narcotics Anonymous is not in any "MARKET". We sell nothing.

We are not in competition with anyone, much less trying to
"CORNER" anything. Recovery cannot be bought or sold. We know,
some of us have tried. We carry the N.A. message for no reward
except the continuation and enrichment of our own recovery.

Then we are told again what the authors think humility should be.

In our experience humility is a favourite code-word of those who
seek to control and coerce the thoughts and behaviour of others.

We find it best to limit ourselves to defining what humility is
for ourselves, and not fixing its definition for anybody else.

In the present context we would suggest that humility means NOT
seeking to occupy ANY place "IN OUR COMMUNITY" as a fellowship.

-And we avoid playing "ROLES" of any kind,-"USEFUL" or otherwise.

Again we ask who are these "OTHERS WHO FOCUS ON ADDICTION AND
RECOVERY"? What "ROLE" are they "PLAYING"? Why mention them?

Are the authors trying to say that they have found nothing at
all in Narcotics Anonymous that is unique and not available
elsewhere? Is that the "MESSAGE" they are carrying through their
"EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE"? If so, how long has this utter
travesty and betrayal of N.A. principles been going on?

For the rest of the article the authors turn from euphemisms to platitudes:- Of course we do not make "OVERBLOWN CLAIMS ABOUT NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS". Whoever said we did? In fact, we do not make any claims at all. We relate our own experience. We speak for ourselves, not for any "COMMUNITY" or outside organisations.

 The authors do not specify under what circumstances or for whom they believe the Narcotics Anonymous program will not work. Pity.

 "ALL WE SAY IS THAT, IF SOMEONE IN THE COMMUNITY HAS A DRUG PROBLEM, N.A. MAY BE ABLE TO HELP"? We say nothing of the kind!

 Let the authors speak for themselves! What Narcotics Anonymous says is clearly set out in the blue book and elsewhere.

 We are NOT concerned with "SOMEONE IN THE COMMUNITY". We are concerned with addicts,-who are often outcasts from, or even victims of, anything that might be termed "THE COMMUNITY".

 As for finding "A HEALTHY PRODUCTIVE PLACE IN SOCIETY", let us remind the authors that "Social acceptability does not equal recovery". It may come as a by-product or side-effect of our recovery, but it is at best a bonus and not a primary objective.

 How exactly are the authors going about gaining "THE GOODWILL OF THOSE IN THE COMMUNITY WHO MIGHT REFER ADDICTS TO US"? By the writing of other articles like the one in N.A. NEWSLINE perhaps?

 By underhand compromises of N.A. principles, by endorsements of doctors, clinics, brainwashing institutions and gurus perhaps?

 We have "but one ultimate authority- a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience". Him, and no other!

 We are an anonymous fellowship,-not a secret society. We do not need or want any introduction services. We are not so snobbish!

 In our experience the "WILD, EXTRAVAGANT CLAIMS" are made by those who seek to force N.A. into a shotgun wedding or marriage of convenience with the forces of authoritarianism on the outside, particularly the so-called "Twelve Step" treatment industry.

Later the authors quote the basic text and-"THE MESSAGE THAT AN ADDICT,-ANY ADDICT, CAN STOP USING DRUGS, LOSE THE DESIRE TO USE AND FIND A NEW WAY TO LIVE,-THAT IS ALL WE HAVE TO GIVE". Amen!

-But note those words:-"ANY ADDICT". Any addict,-no exceptions.

Why should it be "IMPORTANT THAT OUR P.I. COMMITTEES TAKE THE TIME TO CAREFULLY STUDY THEIR COMMUNITIES"? Whatever for?

The "NEED FOR WHAT N.A. HAS TO OFFER" the addict is all too obvious in our experience and needs no study by P.I. committees.

Publicizing the "N.A. SOLUTION TO ADDICTION THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY" is no part of our work at all. Carrying the N.A. message to the addict who still suffers is a different thing.

"N.A. HAS A PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY AND IT'S N.A.'s RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN THAT PLACE." What place? What community? And just how are you maintaining it? Such efforts would seem to be at best a waste of time and at worst another travesty of our traditions!

"WE DO NOT TAKE POSITIONS AS AN ORGANISATION ON ANYTHING OUTSIDE OUR OWN SPECIFIC SPHERE OF ACTIVITY." If only that were true!

What is the whole article you have written and published in this issue of the N.A. Newslines except the almost endless taking of

"POSITIONS AS AN ORGANISATION ON ANYTHING" and almost everything "OUTSIDE OUR OWN SPECIFIC SPHERE OF ACTIVITY"? You are doing it!

N.A. is a fellowship, not an organisation. Check Tradition Nine.

"WE DO NOT EVER TAKE STANDS ON SECONDARY ADDICTION-RELATED ISSUES"

-Don't you? You could have fooled us! What exactly have you been doing throughout your lengthy article or whatever it is?

"WE BELIEVE OUR SOLE COMPETENCE IS IN PROVIDING A PLACE WHERE SUFFERING ADDICTS CAN IDENTIFY WITH OTHERS LIKE THEMSELVES WHO'VE EXPERIENCED SUBSTANTIAL RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION." O.K. provided we remember that that place is spiritual as well as physical and has our Narcotics Anonymous Steps and Traditions at its center.

"TO REMAIN FREE FROM THE DISTRACTION OF CONTROVERSY WE FOCUS OUR ENERGY ON WHAT WE DO BEST AND ONLY THAT." Glad to hear there is something you think N.A. does well. A sharp contrast to your defeatist, apologetic, belittling and pessimistic tone elsewhere.

"P.I. WORK, HOWEVER, IS NOT USUALLY THE KIND OF ADDICT TO ADDICT PERSONAL SHARING THE FIRST PART OF THE EIGHTH TRADITION REFERS TO"

-We cannot understand what you mean by this. The first part of the Eighth Tradition reads-"NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS SHOULD REMAIN FOREVER NONPROFESSIONAL,...-" What's the connection with P.I.?

And what exactly is a "COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER"? Is this a new idea? How does a "COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER" differ from a plain old-style "SERVICE CENTER"? Why add this new "COMMUNITY" tag?

The article then goes on to repeat its main contentions all over again. -"GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS ARE" most certainly NOT "VITAL TO THE FULFILMENT OF N.A.'s PRIMARY PURPOSE". Who needs them?

We have absolutely NO "RESPONSIBILITY TO CARRY OUR MESSAGE AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE". We need to carry it only to other addicts.

And of course we have absolutely no responsibility as a fellowship "TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY" in any way whatsoever, much less "AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE". Narcotics Anonymous has never undertaken to serve any other "COMMUNITY" except that of addicts.

We approach each addict as an individual. We never reduce him or her to the level of a mere component of some "COMMUNITY".

We have nothing to learn from "OTHER ORGANISATIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY" and "WE HUMBLLY ACKNOWLEDGE OUR PLACE" only "IN THE COMMUNITY" of Narcotics Anonymous and in no other "COMMUNITY".

In N.A. we are apart from all other "COMMUNITIES" -larger or otherwise. That separation, that independence, that difference, is our great protection from and wall against the "COMMUNITY"

AROUND US" which offered us little but continuing pain and death p11

"COMMUNITY" or "COMMUNITIES", "LOCAL", "AROUND US", "AT LARGE",
whatever, wherever it is, you can keep it! We'll stay with N.A.

"HUMILITY" does not mean "HUMILIATION". If the authors really
feel that they have so much to be humble about let them speak
for themselves and their "COMMUNITY", whatever it is, and not
for the rest of us in Narcotics Anonymous as a whole.

Dark forces constantly seek to corrupt Narcotics Anonymous, water
down our traditions and break our spirit by destroying our unique
spirituality. They would leave only a dry dead husk with maybe
just the initials "N.A." written on it, their meaning forgotten.

They would reduce Narcotics Anonymous to a mere subsidiary of
their sinister "TREATMENT" movement, a pathetic second-rate
branch office where craven knee-jerking lackeys and slaves might
be allowed to play at being real free individualistic human beings.

Whenever we take refuge in "toleration" of their lies we are just
tolerating their evil and bolstering their intolerance of N.A.
Traditions. When we hide behind "open-mindedness" we are closing
our minds to our N.A. message and spirituality. Above all, when
we claim "humility" as the excuse for our silence and inaction
we are behaving like Charles Dicken's character Uriah Heep, who
was so proud of always being "so humble". We are proud of N.A.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE TRADITIONS

The following is not a policy statement from the World Service Board of Trustees. It is intended merely to stimulate thought and discussion on the importance of our public relations and their effect on Narcotics Anonymous

—WSB External Affairs Committee

We know how important our relations with one another are in NA, because we need one another to continue recovering from addiction. But, even though our groups are autonomous, our fellowship needs more than just the support of our own members. Our community relations also contribute to the fellowship's growth and survival. And that's what this bulletin is about: the principles behind NA's public relations policy. First, we'll look at two reasons why our fellowship seeks good relations with the community. Then, we'll look at what NA's traditions say about our public relations activities.

Community relations— practical importance

It's a given in NA that, as recovering addicts, we have to share our recovery with others in order to stay clean. The same applies to our groups. Without newcomers, the most important people in our meetings are absent. Narcotics Anonymous maintains its vitality by fulfilling its primary purpose: carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

What does that have to do with our public relations? Simple. NA cannot help addicts if they never hear of us, or if our reputation is such that addicts are advised to steer clear of us. True, NA will reach some addicts directly, good community relations or not. Our members will invite friends, family members, and co-workers who seek recovery to attend our meetings. Other addicts will hear of us at H&I presentations; if they need help, they'll know who to call.

The vast majority of still-suffering addicts, however, must be reached indirectly, through others in the community. Most addicts will only hear of us through media reports and announcements, professional referral, or direction given by members of the community-at-large—or they won't hear of us at all. To fulfill our

primary purpose, we will need to seek good, cooperative relations with the community around us. We can't fulfill that purpose on our own.

Community relations—a spiritual path

In NA public information work, we acknowledge that we're "a part of," not "apart from" the community around us. We cannot play our part in fulfilling our fellowship's primary purpose on our own resources alone. And the actions we take to fulfill our primary purpose affect our community, not just our fellowship. Our group, our PI subcommittee, our ASC, our region, and our world services are but parts of a much greater endeavor—human society.

If humility means seeing oneself in proper spiritual perspective, then our community relations are a key indicator of our fellowship's spiritual condition. Public relations work offers us an opportunity, as a fellowship, to improve our spiritual condition. First, PI can help our fellowship remain teachable. As a spiritual society, as a recovery program, and as a social movement, Narcotics Anonymous can learn much from the society around us. Others have done many of the same kinds of things we seek to do. We can learn from them.

Humility also means recognizing our limitations. We don't have all the answers for every troubled person in our community; we don't even have all the answers for every drug addict in our community. In Narcotics Anonymous, one addict shares his experience, strength, and hope with another. Some of the problems related to addiction cannot be satisfactorily addressed that way, and require outside help.

NA is but one tool for addressing addiction, not the only tool. In many communities, a variety of organizations offer help to addicts seeking recovery. Some of them do so with great effectiveness. For whatever reason, some addicts might find recovery more readily through those programs than through Narcotics Anonymous. We don't pretend to have cornered the recovery market. If others can offer help where we cannot, then more power to them.

Humility means recognizing the place we occupy in our community. We have a particular role to play, and a very useful one at that. Our role is different from others'. It's not necessarily better or worse than the role played by others who focus on addiction and

recovery—it's just different. Our public relations and our primary purpose will be best served if we fill our place in the community with life and spirit, to the best of our ability.

Having considered some of the basic issues related to public information work, it's time to take a look at the specific guidance our Twelve Traditions provide for NA's relations with the community. We'll consider our public relations policy of "attraction rather than promotion." We'll look at what we're attracting people to, and whom we're trying to attract. We'll think about how NA relates to other organizations in the community. Finally, we'll touch briefly on the use of service centers in organizing and administering our public relations efforts.

Attraction

Our Eleventh Tradition tells us that "our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion." One of the spiritual principles underlying that kind of public relations policy is humility. When we share our message in public, we state it simply and directly rather than making overblown claims about Narcotics Anonymous. We have had what our members feel to be significant success, but we do not claim to have a program that will work for all addicts under all circumstances or therapeutic views that should be universally adopted. All we say is that, if someone in the community has a drug problem, Narcotics Anonymous may be able to help. We've helped many addicts stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a healthy, productive place in society. We need claim nothing more than that to attract the still-suffering addict to our meetings and gain the goodwill of those in the community who might refer addicts to us.

It should be emphasized, however, that "attraction rather than promotion" does not mean we do nothing to make ourselves known in the community. It's not only all right, but encouraged, to get the word of NA's existence and usefulness out and about. We don't go around making wild, extravagant claims about ourselves or downing the work of others. But we're not a secret society, either. Narcotics Anonymous believes in personal anonymity, not fellowship anonymity.

The Eleventh Tradition spells out only one public relations restriction in detail: "We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." We discourage public media use of full-face pictures of NA members or stories which identify NA members by name. We do this for two reasons. First, we must be able to assure newcomers that their identities as NA members will remain confidential. Second, we want to keep the public media focused on NA's credibility, not on the credibility of the person carrying the message.

The need to maintain personal anonymity in the public media does not prohibit the use of spokespersons. However, those spokespersons should appear not as NA members, but either as special workers whose job is to speak for the organization or as nonaddict friends of the fellowship. More will be said later of special workers, service centers, and their role in NA's public relations.

The Eleventh Tradition focuses on the need for personal anonymity only in the public media. At other levels, personal anonymity is a matter of personal choice. When we know someone with a drug problem, we may disclose to them our identity as recovering addicts and NA members if we think it might be helpful to do so. Likewise, members who make PI presentations at community events, sharing their personal recovery experience as well as general information about the NA program, have not compromised the Eleventh Tradition. So long as we maintain our personal anonymity in the public media, we are supporting the Eleventh Tradition.

Carrying the message

Why do we publicize the NA program? "Each group has but one primary purpose," our Fifth Tradition asserts, "to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." How can we judge the usefulness of a service project? By considering the extent to which it will help our groups fulfill their primary purpose. PI's main job is to attract addicts to group meetings. As the Basic Text reminds us, "The group is the most powerful vehicle we have for carrying the message." (Basic Text, p. 65.)

But what message? It's important that public information subcommittee members be very clear on this matter so that they do not convey inaccurate

impressions of our fellowship to the community. Our Third Tradition says that “the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.” In Narcotics Anonymous, it’s clear that means “to stop using drugs”—not compulsive overeating or gambling or criminality or sex-seeking. The Basic Text goes even further: “The message is that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. That is all we have to give.” (Basic Text, p. 65)

One thing more needs to be considered when we talk about the Third and Fifth Traditions and our community relations. Our fellowship’s primary purpose is “to carry the message to the addict who still suffers”—and that means *any* addict still suffering. Our Third Tradition reinforces the utter lack of restrictions, save one, on membership. Many NA areas begin with groups started among addicts who come from the same social, economic, racial, ethnic, or cultural background. There’s nothing wrong with that, provided NA grows to reach addicts of all backgrounds. It’s important that our public information subcommittees take the time to carefully study their communities. That way, they’ll discover the full range of the need for what Narcotics Anonymous has to offer. In the process, they’ll also learn how to effectively publicize NA’s solution to addiction throughout the community.

Relations with others

Our nonaddict friends have been instrumental in starting Narcotics Anonymous in many communities and helping NA grow. As we’ve already seen, Narcotics Anonymous really couldn’t fulfill its primary purpose without the cooperation of others. We do, however, have certain traditions guiding our relations with other organizations, among them the Sixth, Seventh, and Tenth Traditions:

“An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

“Every NA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

“Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

We seek to provide helpful information about the NA program to others in our community. We seek to cooperate with others as much as we can as members of the community. At the same time, we maintain a clear distinction between NA and other organizations. We neither endorse nor oppose the work of others. We do not provide funds for the work of others and do not accept outside funding for our own activities. NA has a place in the community, and it’s NA’s responsibility to maintain that place.

An area’s public relations efforts ought to be supported entirely by its members and groups through its area service committee. Local businesses, government agencies, or civic organizations may approve so heartily of what we do that they offer advertising funds to help us carry our message. Public information subcommittees are encouraged to decline that kind of support, well intentioned as it is. Narcotics Anonymous needs to pay its own way.

However, it should be noted that self-support questions are not always black-and-white. A phonenumber ad in the local paper, annotated “sponsored by John Doe Chevrolet,” would clearly denote an outside contribution. However, most American TV and radio stations provide a certain amount of free public time to public-benefit organizations. Some transit companies offer reduced bus bench rates to nonprofit endeavors. On the one hand, these could be considered “outside contributions.” On the other hand, to decline them would be the same as to decline to drive on publicly funded roads while on a Twelfth Step call. Each public information subcommittee will have to exercise its own best judgment in such cases.

There is one final matter to keep in mind when considering our relations with other organizations. In order to maintain its focus, Narcotics Anonymous has established a tradition of neutrality on public issues. We do not take positions as an organization on anything outside our own specific sphere of activity. Narcotics Anonymous does not express opinions, either pro or con, on civil, social, medical, legal, or religious matters. We do not even take stands on secondary addiction-related issues such as criminality, law enforcement, drug legalization or penalties,

prostitution, HIV infection, or free needle programs. We believe our sole competence is in providing a place where suffering addicts can identify with others like themselves who've experienced substantial recovery from addiction. To remain free from the distraction of controversy, we focus our energy on what we do best, and only on that.

Community service centers

Public information work requires attention to detail, careful record-keeping, and consistent follow-up. Responsible administration of PI affairs can take a great deal of time—perhaps more time than subcommittee volunteers have available. To assist in the administration of PI services, some areas and regions have created service centers staffed by special workers.

“Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional,” our Eighth Tradition says. “but our service centers may employ special workers.” We don't have paid counsellors at our group meetings. Recovery is freely shared, addict to addict. Public information work, however, is not usually the kind of addict-to-addict personal sharing the first part of the Eighth Tradition refers to. Our goal is to provide consistent, responsible service so that as many addicts as possible can find their way to our meetings. If your area needs additional help doing this, a service center might provide that help. For information on the nuts and bolts of opening and operating a community service center, contact the World Service Office.

Good community relations are vital to the fulfillment of NA's primary purpose. Without the help of others in our community, many addicts will never hear of Narcotics Anonymous. We have a responsibility to maintain our relations with the community, so that our message is carried as widely as possible and so that, in turn, we serve our community as effectively as possible. For our fellowship's own well-being, we need to learn as much as we can from other organizations in our community and humbly acknowledge our place in the community. We in Narcotics Anonymous are “a part of” the larger community around us, not “apart from.” The Twelve Traditions provide specific guidance for our public

relations activities. But without the humble desire to serve our fellow addicts, we'll have no message to carry and no fellowship to publicize.