

TO: World Services Inventory Support Team

FROM: Mary Jensen

DATE: February 28, 1994

RE: Proposed Changes in the Inventory Plan

cc: Composite Group
WSB Steering Committee

The fact that I pondered for several minutes before deciding to whom to address this input indicates that, perhaps, the Support Team has not functioned as the communication link this year as we had anticipated that it would. It occurred to me that maybe that was because the rest of us failed to honor the definition of your role.

I have categorized the areas in your proposal for next year that seem flawed to me. Basically, I see a few major problems and a number of inconsistencies among points in the activities. I realize that a printed report is not comprehensive and may not adequately reflect the depth of your discussions and plan. Nevertheless, I felt compelled to write to you now rather than presenting my concerns for the first time at the conference.

Elimination of the Support Team

I am concerned that the Support Team will be eliminated in next year's plan. There is a reason that all other ad hoc committees have existed as adjuncts of other committees or boards. For example, the Traditions and Steps ad hocs were administered by the WSB and the WSCLC respectively. The NA Service Ad Hoc was overseen by the Administrative Committee. These ad hocs were privileged to have their work and plans reviewed by another body which was not so intimately involved with the projects and was, therefore, able to add the dimension of objectivity. Yet the rationale for the elimination of the Support Group states: "As time has passed, it has made less and less sense to everyone involved--including the Support Team--to have the Composite Group's affairs administered by a completely separate body" (1994 CAR, 19).

As early as the July WSB meeting, we heard it alluded to that the Support Team and the Composite Group interaction was not what it was hoped to be. I would suggest that we look at that interaction in view of our experience with ad hoc committees that produced work in the past. I believe that it was fortunate that their work was viewed objectively by another body and that they were accountable to that body for both the substance of their work and the manner in which the work was produced. A member of the Support Team may need to attend Composite Group meetings to get a feeling of the atmosphere and effectiveness of the group. But it was always the administering body, not the ad hoc, who needed to approach Interim and the conference on the project's behalf.

A second reason for my objecting to the elimination of the Support Team is the dynamics in which we will be working for another year. This year there were basically three active conference working groups--the Composite Group, the Support Team, and the Interim Committee. One of the tenets from which the inventory was proposed was the fact that a few World Services members were doing a massive overload of work and that this practice was insane. We now have apparently two groups doing a massive amount of work; in fact, the only project-oriented work at the world level. The Composite Group is surely feeling the stress of guiding a process, and I appreciate the hard work those members are doing. Without other committees and the WSB meeting, however, the Interim Committee is faced with an increasingly high level of responsibility. I can only imagine what it must be like to have to make all these decisions between conferences when no one else is meeting to consider matters that are at hand. Add to that the plan for next year which calls for the elimination of the only administration of the Composite Group. The Interim Committee now becomes responsible also for the planning and accountability of the only functioning group. This absolutely contradicts the spirit under which the inventory itself was conceived.

Change in the Purpose of the Fellowship Forums

The Fellowship Forums were originally designed as vehicles through which to gain insight and input from the fellowship on the purposes, goals, and functioning of World Services. Under the revised plan, these forums have degenerated into multi-regional CAR workshops; participants from the fellowship are receiving information from the Composite Group rather than being full participants in the inventory process. The plan adopted last year indicated that "The major purpose of these forums will be to share the results of the input received and obtain additional input." The new plan states that "These [Composite Group] members will present information and respond to questions concerning any aspects of the world service inventory in an effort to aid the fellowship and the conference participants in preparing for WSC '95." Additionally, the Fellowship Forums were deleted in the listing of World Service Inventory participants (1994 CAR, 29).

The fellowship's review and input on works in progress has always seemed to me to be our major check and balance to make sure that our work is on target. To eliminate that resource seems ill-advised at any time and particularly when it is our own efforts we are evaluating.

It appears that the Forums may have presented timeline problems. Well, let's either redo the timeline or cancel the forums altogether, being more honest and saying that we will be available, as usual, to participate in multi-regional CAR review workshops. From the plan presented, I don't perceive why the forums couldn't be conducted as originally envisioned. Was this, then, what it appeared at face value: a change in philosophy rather than a change based on temporal economics?

Board and Committee Histories

It was unfortunate that the histories were sent to us after we had already done Part 1 of the inventory. I had hoped to see some description of how we are now to use this material. From the scope of the work, it is apparent that staff had to spend considerable time amassing it. It would be an unfortunate waste if we are not now required to use it in a productive way. It was interesting to glimpse the past and that glimpse surely brought questions to mind. What do we do with this information now? I also notice that the systems analyst will not be using this resource either (see K, p.26).

Change from Proposals to Options

I have reread the plan to try to get a handle on this change. My idea of a proposal is that a group studies a problem and proposes a solution. This proposal is usually molded by the larger group until it feels generally comfortable and workable. In the past, proposals made by an ad hoc would be submitted to their administrating board or committee for review and input, then often on to other reviewers, then to the conference. A proposal isn't a true/false exam; it's amendable. "Various options" implies that the Composite Group will brainstorm possible solutions and present the conference with a multiple choice test. This is a scary proposition. Was it deemed necessary to proceed this way because of the absence of a proposal review body (the Support Team)?

The Analyst: Function and Role

The purpose of the systems analyst seems unclear, and the specific objectives and activities relating to the analyst are contradictory. Again, this may be a difficulty with the printed word and my interpretation of it, but I have chosen a few of the inconsistencies I perceive to give you an idea of the problem here. There seems to be a conflict between K (p.32) and M1 (p.33). K states that "It is intended that the recommendations and evaluations of this independent analyst will be completed by 1 October 1994 so that they can be considered in the Composite Group's identification of problems and issues and the development of options for the resolution of the identified problems." How can the analyst's evaluation and recommendations be used by the teams if she or he is not finished until October 1 and the teams begin work in May? The contract would not have even been completely negotiated by then. Furthermore, N (p.34) has the Composite Team preparing the consultant for the task after the evaluation of Team 1 material and as Team 1 prepares to identify problems and issues. This in itself invalidates the study as the Composite Group will have been entrenched in its fact-finding activities and to the point of near closure. The potential for the analyst being infected by research bias when coming into the process at this late stage is enormous. At this point, I asked myself for the first time, "Why have the systems analyst? He or she is walking into a done deal." Then in P (p.34) we learn that the Composite Group will finalize the problems and issues from Team 1's work in late July or

early August. This is long before the analyst completes the necessary research. How will the analyst's expertise be used?

Later, Q2 (p.35) has the Composite Group finalizing the analyst's report. How can the analyst's report be our objective mirror if we are going to help determine the content of the report? I think it's good that we are going to submit this report as an appendix in the 1995 CAR, but an unfortunate expenditure since it cannot play a vital role in the consideration of our problems and their solutions according to the configuration of the proposed plan. Why not let the analyst do her or his job?

Questioning the Second Year of the Plan (in General)

Part Two of the World Services Inventory was substantive, and working through it as a group was a very productive experience. The next logical recovery step is to allow boards and committees to make sense of the information gathered--to find patterns and clearly identify assets and shortcomings. Then we would present our inventories to fellowship forums, asking them for further information about our functioning. Part Two prepared us to really do a thorough and searching moral inventory, but the inventory isn't completed. Now someone else will take our raw data and do our inventories for us? Very odd.

It's no secret that boards and committees want to work. Why not put us to work on our inventories, then on our fifth, sixth, and seventh steps? Perhaps the experience would be more meaningful if we were to discover the exact nature of our defects and determine to do something about them. These solutions could form the basis of our proposal to the 1995 conference. I just don't see how an external audit would have the same healing effect.

If we are to persist with an externally-driven inventory, the nature of the inventory plan next year should allow for some work to be done by boards and committees. I understand that this cannot be staff-intensive work, but there is a lot that we can accomplish with minimal staff involvement.

Finally, the proposed changes in the inventory plan for next year demonstrate the kinds of problems that can occur when a group's work is not filtered through another body. I believe that the plan should have been not just **considered** by the Support Team (which it probably was), but **submitted** to the Support Team so that you could have not only have provided input to the plan, but also allowed for a wider review of it since you are the communication link.

Well, that's it for now. I seemed to have lost my regular reviewer, so I don't have a "tone check" on this letter to you. I feel quite kindly about all of this, and I hope that comes through. Thanks for all your hard work.