



WORLD SERVICE OFFICE, INC.

P.O. Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409

(818) 780-3951

SPECIAL REPORT

TO: Conference Participants

FROM: WSO Board of Directors

DATE: February 4, 1994

RE: WSO Staff Capacity

There is a crisis brewing at the World Service Office. Human resources are once again being strained to the breaking point. Prudent financial projections indicate a flattening out at best of income over the next several years. These constraints exist in the face of an ever growing fellowship with an accompanying increase in the demand for basic services. While we had been hopeful that the inventory would provide some answers to these issues, while providing world services and WSO staff with a much needed slowdown, the opposite (at least as to the slowdown) has been the case. Our concern is that, unless the above-mentioned issues are addressed immediately in a meaningful way, the patient may expire by the time the inventory medicine arrives.

A bit of history may be instructive. The WSO is just now coming out of the only severe financial downturn the office has experienced in its history. As many of you know, the downturn resulted in staff reductions of approximately 20%, cutbacks in services, literature distribution problems and, ultimately, the near insolvency of the WSO. Through dedication and hard work, WSO staff kept the doors open, doing double duty with less compensation. Until recently, staff positions necessary to provide basic services have remained unfilled, with others yet to be filled. More importantly, critical staff training necessary to provide staff with the tools to be effective and efficient has not taken place at required levels in five years, but must take place in the coming year or basic service demands will continue to overrun office staff. In the last six years, WSO staff responsibility has evolved from a clerical, corresponding secretary type job serving a smaller fellowship in one country to positions that require new skills such as managing teams of personnel, training procedures so that more staff can work in multiple departments while continuing to understand and apply the team concept in staff work and serve a larger international

fellowship. This training is needed both for new as well as experienced employees. If such training does not take place, the result will very likely be more staff illness, departures and general demoralization.

Interestingly, these problems were predicted, yet unheeded, in annual reports to the fellowship as far back as 1988. In the 1988 report our executive director stated "the WSO has also learned that there are limitations on what the WSO can do and should be expected to do. Some of these limitations relate to services needed by the Conference. Recent experience shows clearly that more effort needs to be directed to improving what WSO does rather than attempting to expand services that are provided." With respect to financial matters it was stated "it is clear there are limits imposed by the "normal" level of growth that will determine future growth of spending." Most recently, at the 1993 annual Conference, several board members attempted to inform the Conference of many of these issues but the message seemed to be lost in the rush to complete Conference business.

In the ensuing years, in an effort to deliver the increasing services demanded by the Conference instead of acknowledging and living with the limits pointed out above, the WSO began to devour itself by decreasing its \$400,000 cash reserve down to zero and decreasing the inventory of literature from \$500,000 to \$60,000 while increasing the workload of WSO staff. Consequently, the deterioration of the WSO was invisible to all but those few charged with the responsibility for its operation. This is a scenario we cannot allow to be repeated.

What's the problem, exactly? The ability of WSO staff to perform effectively any activity above basic services, defined as literature production and distribution, translations, literature trust maintenance, group services (i.e. registrations, starter-kits, traditions questions, service issues, etc. etc.), publications, supporting the annual WSC, WCC and quarterlies, and facilitating correspondence of and coordinating work (not requiring support) done by members of conference boards and committees does not exist. That's correct, the ability of staff support beyond the above-described services does not exist but that has not stopped us from demanding more and more from staff. For example, a special projects department was created to support the recently completed major projects *Just For Today, It Works* and the *Guide to Service*. However, due to conference action which created increased regular publications and reports such as the *Conference Digest* and added responsibilities related to the protection of our fellowship's literature required by the Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust, the special projects team has become the publications team, severely limiting the department's ability to support special projects. Nonetheless, key members of the publications team have supported our current major special project, the inventory, with the predictable result that although publications have been timely produced and distributed this conference year giving the impression that all is well, copyright registrations, investigation of possible infringements and management of trademark use, to name a few, have all

suffered. Moreover, interim, executive, steering and administrative committees comprising the three arms of world services plus the world convention have all been made acutely aware by WSO staff that the regular administrative support that they require to keep pace with the conference calendar is yet an additional burden overloading office staff.

What is the solution? Well, first of all it is not to blame or criticize staff. We are confident that they are doing the best they can with what they have to work with. In the short term, we believe an actual slowdown or at least a realistic limit on staff's workload is essential. Such a limit will allow the necessary training and regrouping of personnel required to effectively respond to our fellowship's service needs. In the long term, we continue to be hopeful that the inventory will identify and assist world services to address the issue of accounting for personnel and financial limitations when fulfilling world service's mission.

There are a few overriding issues, however, that we would like to identify which we think must be addressed in order for world services to avoid repeating the same mistakes. We believe that the one year conference business cycle (really an effective six month work period) is unworkable and results in staff, boards and committees always working to get ready for the next event without having been able to give due consideration to the work presently before them. When considering projects at the conference, no consideration is given to the importance of the project as it relates to the overall mission of world services. Consequently, the quality of the work product is often poor and ill-considered. Instead, we must start thinking in terms of longer time horizons, such as, for example, the five-year business plan project initiated by our board. In addition, we all must become more far-sighted and adopt a broader perspective. As long as we insist that what is most important is my board or committee's project or work or that my region's concerns or motions are paramount, then too many disparate agendas will continue to cloud our collective conscience preventing us from saying enough is enough. We point out these issues simply to create the format for a dialogue which we think must occur.

Another major issue that must be acknowledged and discussed is that some reality must be introduced into the administration of world services. By way of example, the research and drafting of this report was undertaken by one of our board members requiring 10-15 hours of work. It was then reviewed by appropriate staff and the board, revised based on comments made and prepared for distribution. More often, the research and drafting of the myriad correspondence, memos, reports and publications is delegated to staff requiring far more time and effort of the WSO. Add to that the faxing, telephone calls and conference calls conducted to process the multitude of comments received from the relevant board or committee members and one can begin to see that it can be a full time endeavor to be world services ghost writer. Similarly, coordinating, participating in and following up on the work produced by the regular conference calls conducted by boards and

committees adds to the workload. And lest we forget, the overlapping administration of the three arms of world service results in additional administrative responsibilities adding to and complexifying the workload. To put this issue into perspective, most of the above-described work is sought to be accomplished by staff on top of what we define as basic services. That being the case, one must consider making choices among providing basic services, supporting special projects and fully supporting the world services board and committee structure.

We plan to expand on the concepts discussed in this report in our annual report to the conference this year to assist your understanding of these issues. A committee of the board is working with staff on a workplan report to explain in detail what it is the WSO staff teams do and what it is they can realistically be expected to achieve in any particular conference year. In addition, each staff team will provide a report describing the work they have accomplished this past year and the challenges they have faced in completing that work. Our hope is to provide the conference with a clear picture of staff's capabilities to assist the conference in its budget deliberations. More importantly, we hope to more fully inform the conference on these issues so that a meaningful discussion can take place on the mission the conference desires the WSO to pursue. Clearly, the WSO cannot be all things to all people. Choices will have to be made to deal with the limitations imposed by reality. We look forward to your input.