

Bill W.'s Twelve Concepts for World Service

The Eleventh Concept—Part I

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for AA's world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore, the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

THE LONG-TIME SUCCESS of our General Service Board will rest not only on the capabilities of the Trustees themselves; it will depend quite as much upon the competent leadership and harmonious association of those non-Trustee committee members, corporate service directors, executives, and staff members who must actively carry on AA's world services. Their quality and dedication, or their lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service. Our final dependency on them will always be great indeed.

Far more than most of the Trustees, these servants will be in direct contact with AA worldwide, and their performance will be constantly on view. They will perform most of the routine labor. They will carry on

most of our services. They will travel widely and will receive most visitors at the Headquarters [now the General Service Office]. They will often originate new plans and policies. Some of them will eventually become Trustees. Because this group will form the visible image of world service, most AAs will measure our service values by what they see and feel in them. Members of this group will not only *support* the world leadership of the Trustees; in the nature of the case, they will be bound to *share* world leadership with them.

Fortunately, we already have a sound internal structure of service in which a very competent group of non-Trustee servants is now working. Only a few refinements and changes will still be needed in AA World Services, Inc., and at the AA

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Grapevine, Inc., the latter being a comparatively recent comer to our service scene. [The first issue was June 1944.] The main outlines of this underlying structure are now defined, and the effectiveness of this arrangement has been well proven. Of what, then, does our underlying structure of service consist?

It is composed of the following elements: the five [now seven] standing committees of the General Service Board, plus our two active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. (including its AA publishing division), and the AA Grapevine, Inc. Let's have a look at each of these operations.

The standing committees of the General Service Board are Nominating, Finance and Budgetary, Public Information, Literature, and Policy [later additions: Professional Relations and Long-Range Planning] — the titles clearly denoting the direct administrative responsibilities of the General Service Board. These committees are appointed yearly by the General Service Board chairman, and each committee, as we have seen, includes a suitable proportion of Trustees, non-Trustee experts in the work to be done, a Headquarters executive, and a staff worker. The Nominating Committee: This committee aids the Trustees in discharging their prime obligation to see that all vacancies — whether within their own ranks or among key

service directors, executives, staff members — are properly filled with members and workers of the greatest possible competence, stability, and industry.

The recommendations of this committee, to a large extent, will determine the continuous success of our services. Its members will have the primary voice in choosing our future Trustees and non-Trustee workers. Careful deliberation, painstaking investigation and interviewing, refusal to accept casual recommendations, preparation well in advance of lists of suitable candidates — these will need to be the principal attitudes and activities of this committee. All temptation to haste or snap judgment will need to be faithfully and constantly resisted.

Another problem that future committees may have to face is the subtle tendency toward deterioration in the caliber of personnel due to the very natural and usually unconscious tendency of those who suggest nominees to select individuals of somewhat less ability than themselves. Instinctively, we look for associates rather like ourselves, only a little less experienced and able. For example, what executive is likely to recommend an assistant who is a great deal more competent than he is? What group of staff members will suggest a new associate whose capabilities are a great deal above their own average? The reverse is the more likely. Government bureaus, institutions, and many commercial

enterprises suffer this insidious deterioration. We have not yet experienced it to any extent, but let us be sure that we never do. All of us need to be on guard against this ruinous trend, especially the Nominating Committee, whose first and last duty is to choose only the best obtainable for each vacant post.

The Finance and Budgetary Committee: The main responsibility of this body is to see that we do not become money-crippled or go broke. This is the place where money and spirituality *do* have to mix, and in just the right proportion. Here we need hardheaded members with much financial experience. All should be realists, and a pessimist or two can be useful. The whole temper of today's world is to spend more than it has, or may ever have. Many of us consequently are infected with this rosy philosophy. When a new and promising AA service project moves into sight, we are apt to cry, "Never mind the money. Let's get at it." This is when our budgeteers are expected to say, "Stop, look, and

listen." This is the exact point where the "savers" come into a constructive and healthy collision with the "spenders." The primary function of this committee, therefore, is to see that our Headquarters operation is always solvent and that it stays that way, in good times and bad.

This committee must conservatively estimate each year's income. It needs to develop plans for increasing our revenues. It will keep a cold and watchful eye on needless cost, waste, and duplication. It will closely scrutinize the yearly budgets of estimated income and expense submitted by AA World Services, Inc., and the AA Grapevine, Inc. It will recommend amendments of the estimates when necessary. At midyear, it will ask for budget revisions if earlier estimates have gone too much wrong. It will scrutinize every new and considerable expenditure, asking, "Is this necessary or desirable now? Can we afford it, all considered?"

This committee, in good times, will insist that we continue to set

aside substantial sums to our Reserve Fund. It will pursue an investment policy in that fund which will guarantee the immediate availability of at least two-thirds of it at any time, without loss, thereby enabling us to meet hard times or even a calamity.

This is not to say that our Finance and Budgetary Committee constantly says "no" and fearfully hoards our money. I can remember an earlier day when we were so intent on building up the Reserve Fund out of book earnings that we let the office services run down badly for sheer lack of enough help to cope with our fast growth. Confidence was thereby lost out in the groups, and contributions suffered severely; they dropped by tens of thousands a year. By the time the office had been reorganized and confidence restored, we had used all our current book earnings and a large part of our Reserve Fund besides. This sort of false and unimaginative economy can prove very costly — in spirit, in service, and in money.

Future committees, therefore, will

ponder the difference between real prudence (which is neither fear nor hoarding and which may indeed require us sometimes to run temporary deficits) and that kind of persistent recklessness which could some day result in the severe contraction or collapse of our vital services.

The safe course will usually lie midway between reckless budget-slashing and imprudent spending.

The Public Information Committee: This one, too, is of top importance. Of course, most of its members should be experts in the field of public relations. But emphasis should also be laid on the fact that sheer commercial expertness will not be quite enough. Because of AA's traditional conservatism, reflected in the maxim "attraction rather than promotion," it is evident that the professional members of the committee should be capable of adapting their business experience to AA's needs. For instance, the techniques used to sell a big-time personality or a new hair lotion would not be for

AA. The committee should always include a certain number of AAs who, because of long experience, really do have "AA sense," that is, a thorough grasp of our total picture and what it needs public-relations-wise.

At the same time, let us not overlook the need for high professional skill. Dealing with the huge complex of public communications as it exists today is not a job wholly for amateurs. Skill in this area implies much technical experience, diplomacy, a sense of what is dangerous and what is not, the courage to take calculated risks, and a readiness to make wise but tradition-abiding compromises. These are the skilled talents we shall always need.

We are trying our best to reach more of those twenty-five million alcoholics who today inhabit the world. We have to reach them directly and indirectly. In order to accomplish this, it will be necessary that understanding of AA and public goodwill towards AA go on growing everywhere. We need to be on even better terms with medicine, religion, employers, governments, courts, prisons, mental hospitals, and all those conducting enterprises in the alcoholism field. We need the increasing goodwill of editors, writers, television and radio channels. These publicity outlets — local, national, and international — should be opened wider and wider, always forgoing, however, high-pressure promotion tactics. It is to, and

through, all these resources that we must try to carry AA's message to those who suffer alcoholism and its consequences.

This accounts for the importance in which we hold the work and the recommendations of our Public Information Committee. It is a critical assignment; a single large public blunder could cost many lives and much suffering, because it would turn new prospects away. Conversely, every real public relations success brings active alcoholics in our direction.

The Literature Committee: This body is charged with the revision of existing books and pamphlets; also with the creation of fresh material to meet new needs or changing conditions. Broadly speaking, its mission is to see that an adequate and comprehensive view of AA in its every aspect is held up in writing to our members, friends, and the world at large. Our literature is a principal means by which AA recovery, unity, and service are facilitated. Tons of books and pamphlets are shipped each year. The influence of this material is incalculable. To keep our literature fully abreast of our progress is therefore an urgent and vital work.

The Literature Committee constantly will have to solve new problems of design, format, and content. Here our policy is to aim at only the best; we firmly believe that cheap-looking, cheap-selling, and poorly conceived literature is not in AA's

best interest from any standpoint, whether effectiveness, economy, or any other.

Like other General Service Board committees, this one must be expert in the work to be done. A key figure in its operation will necessarily be a paid writer and consultant. [Several professional writers now handle literature projects.] The creative work — that is, the initial form and draft and the final development of new undertakings — will be for this specialist to do. The role of the other committeemen will be of constructive criticism and amendment of the consultant's effort. Here, too, we should remember that the committee must certainly include persons of wide AA experience. This matter of getting the "AA feel" into all our writings is absolutely vital. What we say so well by word of mouth we must also communicate in print.

The Literature Committee consequently will find it desirable to test carefully each new creation by asking a number of AAs who are sensitive to AA feeling and reaction to offer their criticism and suggestions. If the new material is to affect the nonalcoholic world, especially the fields of medicine and religion, a consultation should be held with those nonalcoholic Trustees or other qualified friends who are knowledgeable in these areas.

The Policy Committee: Perhaps this is the most important of all of the General Service Board committees, and it is regarded as the senior

one. It can take jurisdiction of practically all problems or projects involving AA policy, public information, or AA Traditions that may arise in the other committees or service corporations.

Several years ago, it became evident that the mass of business coming before the quarterly Trustees meetings had become too big to handle. We therefore had to devise a committee that could filter all these matters, disposing of the lesser and fully examining the larger. The object was to break the jam at Trustees meetings and to present the Board with carefully discussed recommendations, including minority reports, on the more serious issues. Thus, the attention of the General Service Board could be accurately focused on what it really had to do. This committee, with ample time at its disposal, could also strengthen our process of planning and policy formation. It could avert blunders, both large and small, due to haste.

This was our original, concept, and it has worked wonderfully well. Because this committee is designed to be supersensitive to AA opinion and reaction, its hard core is composed of (a) the "out-of-town" [now termed "regional"] AA Trustees, one of whom is traditionally named chairman, (b) two staff members of the World Service Office, (c) the president of AA World Services, Inc., who is also general manager of the World Office, (d) the president of the AA Grapevine, Inc., who is the

editor, and (e) those Trustees and service directors known to be long experienced with our Fellowship. [The editor of the Grapevine is no longer a member of this committee. However, the editors are invited to attend its meetings.]

All other Trustees, committee members and directors, and staffs are invited to attend meetings — the Trustees because they can thus get a preview of the questions that will confront them at their own meeting to follow — the committeemen and directors because in this way they will get a comprehensive picture of what other Headquarters units have been doing.

This is a large committee, and it operates "town-meeting style," requiring four to six hours each Sunday afternoon preceding the Monday quarterly meeting of the General Service Board. [It now meets three times a year, omitting the April session because the Conference is held then.] A carefully worked out agenda is always prepared. The committee issues to the Trustees a full report of its recommendations, together with any minority views. Its report

also shows the actual disposition of minor matters.

This Policy Committee has greatly strengthened our Headquarters unity. All participants get the feeling that they are "on the team." The size of the meeting is no obstacle. Many minds, plenty of time, and real sensitivity to AA insure a remarkable effectiveness of policy and planning.

Again, it *is* emphasized that none of these five General Service Board committees are executive in character. They do not manage and conduct the active affairs of the service corporations. They may, however, make any recommendations they wish — to the service corporations themselves or to the Trustees. It will be noted that the Policy Committee always examines the quarterly reports of the corporate services and such reports of the other General Service Board committees as may be available at meeting time. The committee can and does comment upon these reports and makes recommendations respecting them.

[The chapter on Concept XI will be continued in the October issue.]