

April 1954

Are We Forgetting

"The Millions Who Still Don't Know"?

I HAVE never attended one of the General Service Conferences, which are held in New York each spring, but I have been privileged to observe how much these Conferences have contributed to our Third Legacy of service. I was a member of one of the first State Committees, and therefore received all essential information about the need of such a Conference from the Alcoholic Foundation, as well as first-hand reports from our own State Delegate. Our present Delegate, a very close friend of mine, has added greatly to my understanding of the value of the Conferences. So I know now, as many of you do, that the Conference is our democratic way of expressing our fellowship-opinion on AA matters so that our Foundation Trustees, our General Service Headquarters and our

Grapevine staff will always have "grass roots" guidance on their ever-expanding efforts to do worldwide Twelfth Step work.

Perhaps I take it for granted—because I, too, owe so much to AA—that these Delegates from all the states and Canadian provinces would naturally be willing to devote much time and effort to Conference matters. However, I am puzzled as to why we make it necessary for them, and our state and provincial Committeemen, to work so hard to secure funds to pay the expenses of the very Conferences which we ask our Delegates to attend.

Surely, as the fourth Conference will be held in April, we must all know by now that it is hoped that each group will contribute \$10, or \$5 if the group is a small one and

can afford it, to defray the expenses of the Conference. Yet, despite the fact that we are all on notice, I believe that only about twenty-five per cent of all U.S. and Canadian groups contributed to the General Service Conference in 1953. What is the answer?

Is it because our group secretaries are failing to bring the need to the attention of their groups? There is a lot of evidence to suggest that is one of the sad answers. Most of us need a little prodding and so, if our group secretary doesn't pass the hat our group contribution just doesn't get sent along. Of course, there's the ever-ready answer that many of us get pretty tight with a buck as soon as we get sober but surely we all have so much to be grateful for that we'll gladly ante up the price of a drink to give our General Service Headquarters the assistance it seeks from our Delegates-in-Conference.

I wonder, then, if too many of us are thinking of the Conference as an end in itself and therefore don't see any need of helping to pay the bill. Perhaps many of us who used to attend various conferences when we were drinking, have decided that conferences are only for the pleasure of those who attend and that nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished. (If you know your Delegate, ask him or

her if they ever worked harder in their lives than they did at the Conference.) Actually, the General Service Conference is not an end but simply a means to further the invaluable services which our service arms in New York perform on behalf of all of us who have been blessed with happy sobriety through AA.

Is one of the answers the grave possibility that we who are now sober no longer care too much about what happens to the millions of alcoholics who still suffer, especially if they're only a statistic in some remote place or prison?

There's only one good answer, so far as I'm concerned, and that is for all of us to take the load off our Delegates and Committeemen and place it where it belongs—on our own shoulders. Let each of us, as sober, grateful members of AA, accept the responsibility of seeing that our group's contribution has been sent in before the Conference begins. And since, unfortunately, not every member subscribes to *The Grapevine*, let's be sure that we who do accept the challenge. Let's send *our* Delegates to *our* next Conference with the full knowledge that we are sharing with them the privilege of serving AA so that AA may better serve the "millions who still don't know."

Anonymous, Mass.