



Newsletter of the New Jersey Region

November 2003

Fund Flow

The region contributed another \$5,200 to World Services at the September meeting, bringing the year-to-date total to \$21,000. Even after this contribution, the treasury still maintained a balance in excess of \$17,000 at close of business, vastly above the established prudent reserve. Budgets were approved for the Regional Delegate, (\$1,430), and the RD-Alternate, (\$2,310.) A big part of the difference comes from the fact that the RD's expense for the World Service Conference is paid out of the World budget, but sending an Alternate is the financial responsibility of the region.

The body also approved expenses of \$138.93 for copies of the sponsorship draft booklet, and \$250 for holding the GSR Assembly.

On the Road, Again

In looking at the budgets for the Regional Delegate and Alternate, it was striking to notice the way the number of events at which we are represented has grown over the years.

From October '03 through July '04, we are budgeting to send one or both delegates to half-a-dozen events that we know of thus far. These include:

1. History Conference in Nashville, October 3-5, 2003.
2. Multi-Regional learning event in Maine, Dec.12-14, 2003.
3. Queens N.E. Zonal Forum meeting, January 30-February 1, 2004.
4. MARLCNA, February 13-15, 2004.
5. World Service Conference, California, April 24-May 2, 2004.
6. Williamsport, Pa. NEZF meeting, July 23-25, 2004.

These 24 days on the road in a ten month period are in addition to any GSR assemblies, Area CAR workshops and regional attendance during that period. When those are added in, we now have our delegates committed to devoting about one out of every ten days of their lives during this period to attending service events. We presently have people able to do this, but would these time demands not exclude about 99 out of 100 otherwise qualified candidates for these positions? Should we be looking to split some of these responsibilities out of the RD commitment, or reduce the number of events to which we send representatives?

Movement on Treasury Guidelines

Roughly six months after the initial proposal to approve revised Treasury Guidelines, the Joint Administrative Committee reached consensus on recommending a package for discussion and adoption. The guidelines put all information on the subcommittee budget, prudent reserve, audits and Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer job descriptions into a single two-page document. Copies were provided in the September minutes, and the guidelines are scheduled for discussion, and conceivably passage, at the November meeting.

Positions, Filled and not

The September region elected long-time fixture Mark M. as Chairperson, and Margherite W. as Vice-chair. The region also confirmed John W. as Convention chair for NJRC 19. Congratulations and best wishes to the new and returning trusted servants.

The position of Public Information chair remains vacant, and Newsletter and History and Archives chairs are also open for election at the November meeting.

Atmosphere of Recovery Tip #2:

Be sure to leave your cell phone or pager turned on. Drowsy members will be grateful for your assistance in remaining awake and alert.



And remember— if going to a meeting is good, and using the phone is good, then using the phone in a meeting must be twice as good.

Send input and articles to:

**Sanity 4729 Larchwood Ave.
Philadelphia Pa. 19143**

**Phone:(215)476-0655
e-mail: bob115@earthlink.net**

Sanity is published every two months as a service of the New Jersey region for its groups and members. Input and articles are welcome on all recovery-related topics. Opinions expressed here are those of individual addicts, not N.A. as a whole.

Members interested in receiving an electronic copy in PDF format should send e-mail to Sanity at bob115@earthlink.net with the phrase SUBSCRIBE SANITY in the message header.

Evaluating our Convention Problems— a Beginning

For those not aware of it, the regional convention has been increasingly plagued in recent years by extremely variable support, and declining participation and revenues. A decade ago, \$10,000 coming into the region would have been considered low, but 2001 was the last year that the region received any proceeds at all from its convention. In 2003, things reached the point that the convention actually showed a *loss* of approximately \$7500. This was balanced out by the only-works-once expedient of closing out the books from all previous conventions, which may have barely made up the difference, but obviously this is not tenable as a long-term state of affairs.

The Board of Trustees is apparently devoting some attention to this issue, as their last report mentions that “we had lengthy discussions on how we can do things differently to have a successful event this year.” As to what specific direction, if any, those discussions took, no further enlightenment was provided.

Outgoing regional chair John M. has devoted some effort to opening a discussion of the matter. In an open letter reprinted in the minutes, he suggests future meetings to deal with the issue. His proposals are based on an understanding which attributes most problems to 1) a general rise in hotel costs, and 2) “an excessive number of conventions.” Based on this premise, he goes on to suggest a number of ideas on cost-reduction, timing coordination, and cooperation among neighboring conventions. Most of these would involve significant changes in how both the Region and those Areas that hold conventions operate. He commendably suggests future meetings to bring together various involved parties for discussion.

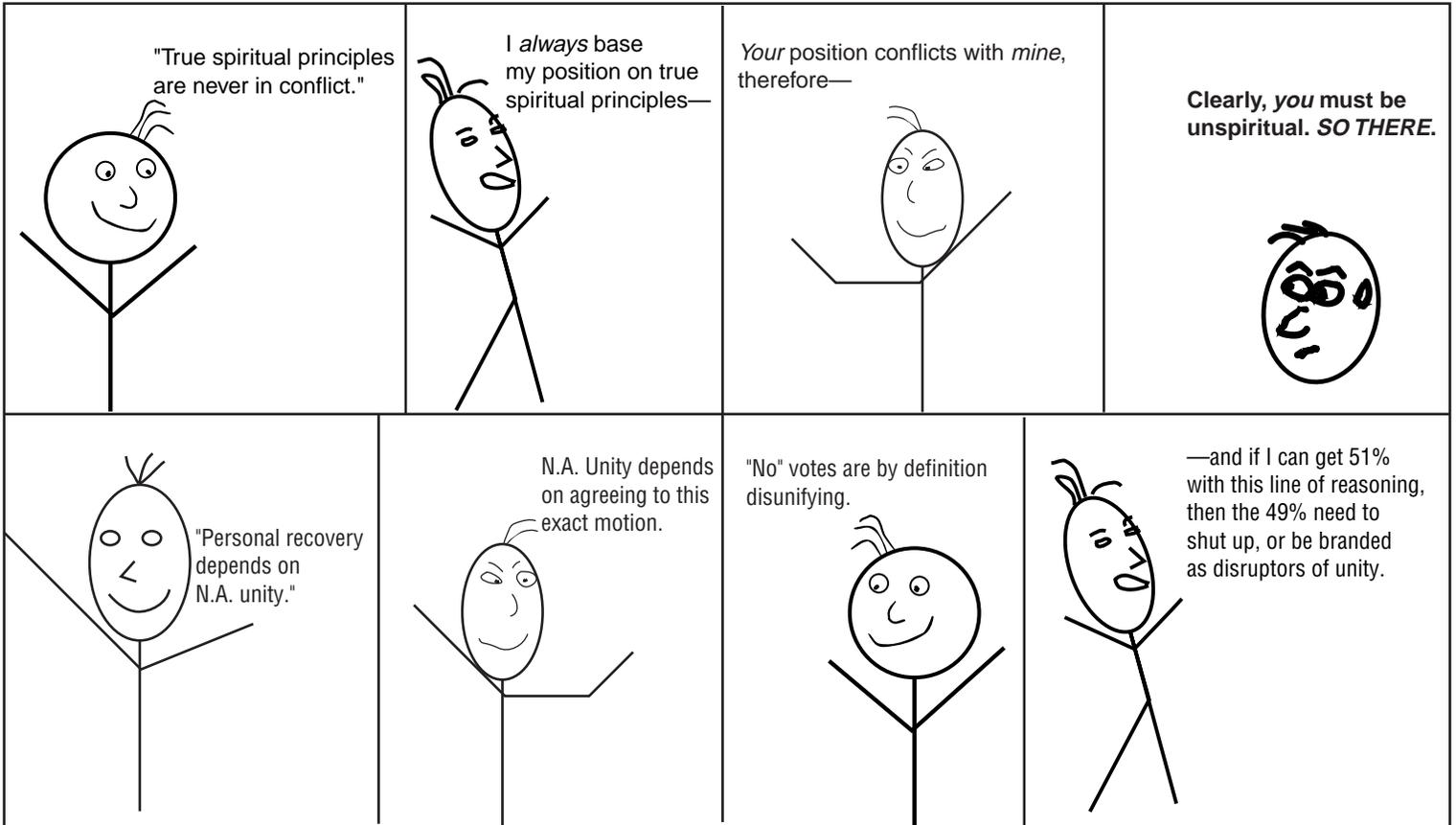
While this is certainly a useful contribution to beginning discussions, we are inclined to question both the basic premises and the tendency to leave other, “closer to home”, issues unaddressed. We have tended for years to attribute most of the convention’s difficulties to external factors, but is this really true? With respect to the second premise of an excessive number of conventions, we should probably at least take this chance to collect the relevant data. What have registration numbers looked like in Cape-Atlantic, Northeast, Capital and other convention-holding areas the last few years? If they are as unstable and dwindling as ours, this would tend to support the idea that the problem is the number of conventions. If, however, many of the area conventions seem to have a consistent base of support and generally finish well in the black, that would indicate that the main problems are specific to the Regional Convention, and that it is more a matter of setting our own house in order.

In any case, one suspects that areas will be better disposed to cooperate with the Region in this matter if we are seen to be looking at our own part of the problem, rather than simply blaming our failures on their successes.

So— what other issues might use some attention? We might start with the controversies and infighting that have developed around the Regional convention over the years, seriously consider the possibility that these have played a role in alienating potential customers, and figure out how to behave differently. The number of people who can be persuaded to attend a convention by appeals to a “duty” to “support” it, is pretty low. Generally, people attend conventions because they expect to have a good time. And there are people who for years attended the New Jersey convention because they enjoyed it who stopped finding it enjoyable some time ago.

Whatever other measures may be taken, if the increasingly narrow appeal of our convention, specifically, is not dealt with, it will probably be, at the end of the day, a case of “half-measures availing us nothing,” or yet another illustration of the principle that “if nothing changes, nothing changes.”

Nicky Newcomer in "The Spiritual Algebra of Intolerance"



TELL YOURSELF:

Just For Today my thoughts will be on my own business, living my program of recovery and not shoving it down anybody else's throat.

Just For Today I will remember that the Fellowship was fine before I got here and will be fine if I leave.

Just For Today I will be myself and let God be God.

Just For Today I will remember that there are at least two ways of looking at just about anything, and that I have no monopoly on the truth.

Just For Today I will remember that my opinions are just that-opinions, and that if people wanted them they would probably ask for them.

Regional Learning Day/GSR Assembly

Saturday, November 29
Noon to 5 pm
Social Center, 1st Presbyterian Church
270 Woodbridge Avenue
Metuchen

This is the second GSR assembly of the year, but all addicts are welcome and both the event and the food are free. Workshop topics include:

1. What is a GSR?
2. Self-support (WSC discussion topic)
3. Sponsorship booklet and first look at 2004 CAR.
4. The N.A. Service Structure
5. N.A. History
6. Spiritual speaker.
So come out and learn and play if you can.

Self-Support, once again

Our Region has discussed one of the topics assigned for this year—Atmosphere of Recovery. We may get a chance to discuss the second topic—Self-Support—at the GSR Assembly on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. I certainly hope to see some of you there. But, for those who can't attend that event, I thought I would attempt to stimulate some dialogue by writing this brief piece.

This is the second cycle in a row we have been asked to consider this topic. By itself that suggests that self-support is seen by some as of vital importance to the fellowship at this time.

I recall my favorite 7th tradition meeting took place years ago at an inner city meeting in Boston. Lots of people had something to say about the principle of self-support. And, most of their recovery messages emphasized the importance personal self-support played in individual recovery.

I suppose the people who wished us to again address this topic could have believed prior discussion attempts had downplayed the linkage between self-support and personal recovery. Now, wanting this factor to be highlighted, they reintroduced the topic.

This could be true, but I doubt it.

Also, I suppose it could be true that the people who wished us to again address this topic could have believed prior discussion attempts had failed to note the way self-support in our 7th tradition warned against reliance on outside sources of funding as a means of avoiding entanglement with outside institutions and issues.

This could be true, but, here again, I doubt it.

✍ So, what points would these people like us to appreciate that we seem to have so far failed to appreciate? Are we too reliant on fund-raising events like conventions? And, if 'we' are too reliant on these events who, exactly, is are the 'we' who are too reliant? We here in the New Jersey Region have become more reliant on Area conventions than on our Regional convention. That is a hotly debated issue. But, either way, we must admit that we are convention-fund dependent. But then, if we are, so is World, since the funds we contribute to World come from the funds we receive from Areas and much of this funding comes from Area conventions. Is this a problem? For whom is this a problem?

✍ The spiritual tradition section of the 7th tradition speaks about gratitude, supporting our program out of the gratitude we have for its life-saving influence on our lives. Do the people who wish us to discuss this topic fear that we lack gratitude; that we are not suitably expressing our gratitude? We— at Region— are probably the wrong audience if that is the ques-

tion. We tend to be people dedicated to service. Therefore, we tend to be people who give back what we can to the fellowship that is saving our lives. Most of us give in time, most of us spend some of our own money to make it possible to give our time, and, probably, most of us make contributions when the basket goes around. We might be able to identify people we know who are not so generous with the fellowship, but we wouldn't want to lack generosity of spirit with them, would we?

✍ Maybe the point the people who wish the dialogue repeated hope to emphasize is the need for simplicity. I keep wishing I were a simpler person with a simpler life-style. I keep saying that 'one of these days' I am going to really commit to 'less is more.' But, for many of us, recovery is the first time in our lives we have been able to give ourselves and our loved ones some of the benefits money can buy. True, some of us go overboard. But, isn't learning balance part of our process. So what if I bought more car for more money than I really absolutely need? OK, that shows a lack of some kind of practical judgment, and, that is a sign of spiritual weakness. Do I really believe the entire fellowship must reconsider the issue because too many of us are drifting too far into materialistic achievement when we should know better? I guess that is possible. Think about it. Take it personally the way I did.

What do you think the NA remedy would be for personal over spending? It has to lie in step work, doesn't it? I am busy reconsidering some heavy 7th step issues this weekend. I'd rather not add what seems to me to be relatively harmless over spending to the list. But, if I must, I must.

✍ Meanwhile, to draw this document to a close, what I really think we are requested to consider is how much we in this relatively wealthy country can do for NA fellowships in less affluent parts of the world. I think, maybe, we are suppose to consider how they are ever to become self-supporting when the literature, key tags, readings and other materials are priced according to economic terms established here in one of the richest country's in the world. This strikes me as a serious problem that concerns the well-being of the entire fellowship. It strikes me as a problem with self-support and our 7th tradition that I never quite focused on before this afternoon. An, while I don't have any answers, I can hardly complain about being asked to reconsider a topic if that reconsideration moves me to be more aware of the needs of others.

Thanks for listening.

I would love to hear your thoughts on the matter.

Muk, Regional delegate