

## Tradition 7

*Every A.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions*

*Long form.) The A.A. group themselves ought to be fully self supported by the voluntary contributions of their members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.*

Self supporting alcoholics? Who ever heard of such a thing? Yet we found that we have to be. This principal is telling evidence of the profound change that A.A. has wrought in all of us. Everybody knows that active alcoholics scream that they have no troubles that money can't cure. Always we have had are hands out. Time out of mind we've been dependent on somebody, usually money-wise. When a society composed entirely of alcoholics says it is going to pay their bill, that's really news. (12 and 12)

It's small use yearning for the impossible. Money has entered our and we are definitely committed to its sparring use. No one would seriously think of abolishing our meeting places and clubs for the sake of money all together. Experience has shown that we very much need these facilities, so we must accept whatever risk there is in them.

But how shall we keep these risks to a minimum; how shall we traditionally limit the use of money so that it may never topple the spiritual foundation upon which each A.A. life so completely depends? This is our real problem today. So let us look together at the main phases of our financial situation, seeking to discover what is essential, what is nonessential, what is legitimate and harmless, and what may be dangerous or unnecessary.

Suppose we begin with voluntary contributions. Each A.A. finds himself dropping money in "the hat" to pay the rent of a meeting place, a club or the maintenance of his local or national headquarters. It can be said fairly that the vast majority of us believe these services are basically necessary. Provides such facilities are efficiently handled, and their funds properly accounted for, we are only too glad to pledge them our regular support, with the full understanding, of course, that such contributions are in no wise a condition of such membership.

These are places of service; they cannot really control or govern A.A. If any of them were to become inefficient or overbearing the remedy is simple enough. The average A.A. would stop his financial support until conditions were changed. We can always "take our special facilities or leave them alone." These services must serve us well or go out of business.

In direct line with the principal of "taking facilities or leaving them alone" there is an encouraging tendency to incorporate all such special functions separately if they involve any great amount of money, property or management. More and more the A.A. group realizing that they are spiritual entities, not business organizations.

A large club or central office usually means one or more paid workers. What about them are they professionalizing A.A.? It is usually found wise to incorporate and so set the club apart from surrounding groups. Support of the club then becomes an individual matter rather than a group matter. Our evolution in large A.A. centers is beginning to indicate most clearly that while it is a proper function of a cluster of groups, or their central committee to support a paid secretary for their area, it is not a group or central committee function to support clubs financially. Not all A.A.'s care for clubs. Therefore club support has to come mainly from those individual A.A.'s who need or like the clubs.

What would constitute Professionalizing A.A.?

A large club or central office usually means one or more paid workers. What about them are they professionalizing A.A.? The reason for our fuzzy thinking is the usual one it-is fear. The slightest thought of marring our ideal, much less bartering it for gold, is to most of us unthinkable.

Yet there is a principal upon which I believe we can honestly solve our dilemma. It is this: a janitor can sweep the floor, a cook can boil the beef, a steward can eject a troublesome drunk, a secretary can manage an office, an editor can get out a newspaper all, without professionalizing A.A. If we didn't do these jobs we would have to hire non alcoholics to do them for us. We would not ask any non alcoholic to do these things full time with out pay. Clearly the principal seems to be that we may pay well for special services- but never for straight twelve step work.

How then A.A. could be professionalized? Quite simply. I might, for example, hire an office and hang on the door a sign reading: Bill W. - Alcoholics Anonymous Therapist. Charges \$10.00 per hour." That would be face to face treatment of alcoholism for a fee. And I would surely be trading on the name Alcoholics Anonymous, a purely amateur organization, to enlarge my professional practice. That would be professionalizing A.A.- and how! It would be quite legal, but hardly ethical.

Now does this mean we should criticize therapist as a class – even A.A.’s who might chose to go into that field? Not at all. The point is that no one ought advertise himself as a A.A. therapist. We don’t care if A.A.’s go into these fields but they certainly ought never to use their A.A. connection publicly or in such a way as to make people feel that A.A. has such a special class within its own ranks. That is where we draw the line.

To sum up what we have observed.

- A.) That the use of money in A.A. is a matter of the gravest importance. Where its use ends and misuse is the point we should vigilantly watch.
- B.) That A.A. is already committed to a qualified use of money, because we would not think of abolishing our offices, meeting places and clubs simply for the sake of avoiding finances all together.
- C.) That our real problem today consists in setting intelligent and traditional limits upon our use of money, thus keeping its disruptive tendency at a minimum.
- D.) That the voluntary contributions or pledges of A.A. members should be our principal and eventually our sole support; that this kind of self- support would always prevent our clubs and offices from getting out of hand, because their funds could readily be whenever they failed to serve us well.
- E.) That we have found it generally wise to separately incorporate those special facilities which require much money or management; that an A.A. group is a spiritual entity, not a business concern
- F.) That we must at all cost, avoid the professionalization of A.A.; that simple twelve step work is never to be paid for; that A.A.’s going into alcohol therapy should never trade on their A.A. connection; that there is not, and can never be, any such thing as an “A.A. therapist.”
- G.) That A.A. members may, however, be employed by us as full time workers, provided they have legitimate duties over and beyond normal Twelfth Step work. We may, for example engage secretaries, stewards and cooks without making them professional A.A. (A.A. Tradition How it developed. By Bill. Wilson.)