

“TRADITION SEVEN”

(Short form)

7. *“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”*

(Long form)

7. *“The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of 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.”*

“A.A.’s far-flung Twelfth Step activities, carrying the message to the next sufferer, are the very lifeblood of our A.A. adventure. Without this vital activity, we would soon become anemic; we would literally wither and die.

“Now where do A.A.’s services—worldwide, area, local—fit into our scheme of things? Why should we provide these functions with money? The answer is simple enough. Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office to arrange hospitalization and sponsorship, or the world service Headquarters [now the General Service Office] to maintain unity and effectiveness all over the globe.

“Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion—to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength—and that, under our Tradition of self-support, *we are all going to foot the bill.*”

(Bill W., October 1967 Grapevine)

Alcoholics are certainly all-or-nothing people. Our reactions to money prove this. As A.A. emerged from its infancy into adolescence, we swung from the idea that we needed vast sums of money to the notion that A.A. shouldn't have any. On every lip were the words "You can't mix A.A. and money. We shall have to separate the spiritual from the material." We took this violent new tack because here and there members had tied to make money out of their A.A. connections, and we feared we'd be exploited. Now and then, grateful benefactors had endowed clubhouses, and as a result there was sometimes outside interference in our affairs. We had been presented with a hospital, and almost immediately the donor's son became its principal patient and would-be manager.

If outside donations weren't declined, absolutely cut off, then the Foundation would one day become rich. Moreover, at the slightest intimation to the general public from our trustees that we needed money, we could become immensely rich. Compared to this prospect of an outside donation of ten thousand dollars under consideration wasn't much,

but like the alcoholic's first drink it would, if taken, inevitably set up a disastrous chain reaction. If the A.A. Foundation obtained money from outside sources, its trustees might be tempted to run things without reference to the wishes of A.A. as a whole. Relieved of the responsibility to donate, every alcoholic would shrug and say, "Oh, the Foundation is wealthy--why should I bother?" The pressure of that fat treasury would surely tempt the board to invent all kinds of schemes to do good with such funds, and so divert A.A. from its primary purpose. The moment that happened, our Fellowship's confidence would be shaken. The board would be isolated, and would fall under heavy attack of criticism from both A.A. and the public. These were the possibilities, pro and con. With this, our trustees wrote a bright page of A.A. history. They declared for the principle that A.A. must always stay poor. Bare running expenses plus a prudent reserve would henceforth be the Foundation's financial policy. Difficult as it was, they officially declined that ten thousand dollars, and adopted a formal, airtight resolution that all such future gifts would be similarly declined. At that moment, we believe, the principle of corporate poverty was firmly and finally embedded in A.A. tradition.

(Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions)

Over the years, Alcoholics Anonymous has affirmed and strengthened the tradition of being fully self-supporting and of neither seeking nor accepting contributions from nonmembers. Within the Fellowship, there are no limits on the amount of money an A.A. group or an A.A. event can contribute to G.S.O. This limit also applies to a one-time bequest of \$3,000 in the wills of deceased members.. Although, the amount that may be contributed by any individual member to G.S.O. is limited to \$3,000 a year.

(A.A. At A Glance)

According to the Seventh Tradition, every group should be self-supporting, and the Tradition includes such pooled services as those provided by the General Service Office. In recent years, A.A. groups have contributed enough to cover about two thirds of the service expenses (services are provided to all registered groups, whether or not they make a contribution). The rest has been covered by publishing income, which was in excess of that required for publishing expenses.

In 1986, the General Service Board asked for a special effort to inform the Fellowship of the dangers inherent in this situation; particularly that a substantial fraction of the publishing income was, at that time, derived from outside sources. The effort was begun to inform the groups about this growing problem. The challenge was to make G.S.O.'s service work self-supporting through contributions of the membership and to sell literature at cost to everyone. The number and extent of group services have increased over the years, but the real cost of service per group has decreased consistently owing to the growth of the Fellowship. However, all groups do not contribute to the support of the service work. About 55% do not. This places a heavier burden on the groups that do. More important than the dollar amount of contributions, however, is group participation in this part of A.A. service work, as in the other activities that make groups members of the A.A. community. Making regular contributions to G.S.O. ties a group to A.A. worldwide.

(THE A.A. SERVICE MANUAL combined with TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE

by Bill W. 2007-2008 Edition)

From its earliest beginnings, A.A. has always incurred expenses — whether it be the cost of a pot of coffee or the price of a place to meet. In the early days, these costs were often absorbed by individual A.A.'s or nonalcoholic friends who offered their parlors and living rooms for A.A.'s to meet in. However, as A.A. outgrew the generosity of these early friends and members, the Fellowship's need for income became more and more apparent.

Bill W., A.A.'s co-founder, and some of the early A.A. members initially felt the only way for the Fellowship to survive was to solicit financial support from philanthropic institutions or individuals outside A.A. These "high rollers" could then supply the funds the Fellowship would need to carry out the vital Twelfth Step work the early A.A.'s envisioned — to bankroll the army of paid missionaries, the chain of A.A. hospitals, and the library of books they were certain to write. One potential A.A. patron, however, when approached by the pioneering members for money, instead helped to lay the groundwork for A.A.'s Tradition of self-support: "I am afraid that money will spoil this thing," said John D. Rockefeller Jr., while at the same time endorsing the work of the fledgling Fellowship. This marked a turning point in A.A. history and, as the reality of Mr. Rockefeller's statement sank in and A.A. members began to see the truth in the old cliché, "Who pays the piper calls the tune," the seed of the Seventh Tradition took root.

Members celebrate sobriety by giving time, energy and money in support of our Twelfth Step—carrying the message—the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship offers. Members assure that group expenses are paid by putting money into the basket passed at each meeting. It is each member's responsibility to support the services that have been requested by the A.A. Fellowship, to help facilitate A.A.'s vital Twelfth Step. Contributions are made in a spirit of sacrifice, and they honor A.A.'s code of "love and service." Contributions also underscore the spiritual nature of our Fellowship and our mutual love and trust. We have found that these contributions are as important to each member as they are to the service centers supported.

Groups support A.A.'s essential services because the services benefit all A.A. groups. A.A.'s want our Fellowship to endure, and to be readily available for the still-suffering alcoholic to come. An A.A. group makes this possible by taking care of its **basic group expenses**: *rent, refreshments, A.A. literature, local meetings lists, etc.* After meeting these basic group expenses and providing a meeting place, many groups participate by supporting A.A.'s essential services. The General Service Conference suggests that individual groups, through an informed group conscience, adopt a specific contribution plan tailored to meet the group's financial situation. Once the basic group expenses have been taken care of and a "prudent reserve" has been set aside to cover unexpected expenses, the group may decide to further carry the message by sending money to the following A.A. service entities:

- **The local district**, which communicates directly with the groups, providing the district group conscience for the area assemblies, and serving as a link between the area delegates and the G.S.R.s.

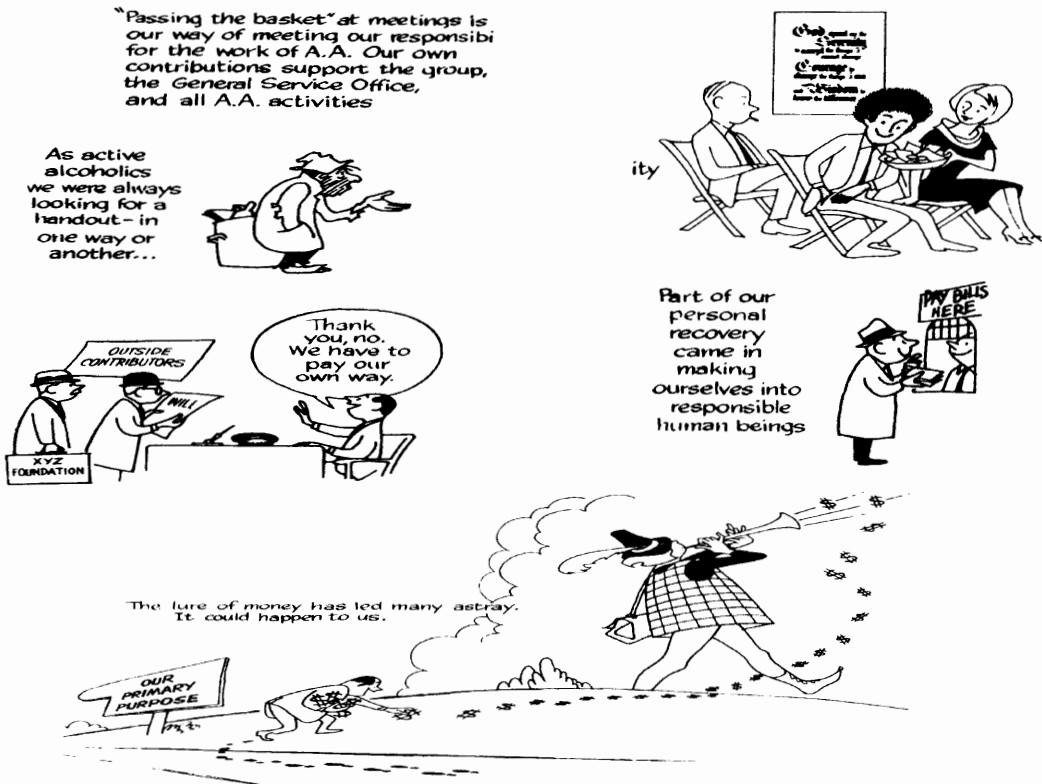
- **The area committee**, which coordinates vital A.A. activities over a broad geographic area; sends a delegate to the annual General Service Conference; holds area assemblies to determine the needs of the Fellowship; and provides information at all levels of service.

- **The local intergroup or central office**, which may provide phone service for the Twelfth Step calls and other inquiries; coordination of group activities; A.A. literature sales; institutions work; public information and cooperation with the professional community activities.
- **A.A.'s General Service Office**, which functions as a storehouse of A.A. information, communicating with members and groups in the U.S. and Canada, and sometimes around the world; publishes A.A.'s literature; and supplies information and experience to professionals and others interested in A.A.

“Now that we are sober in A.A., the word ‘support’ has to do with sharing, people, self-respect, gratitude, and what we are privileged to give — not take — in material terms.”

While the Fellowship has always faced problems of money, property, and prestige in one form or another, through the wisdom of the Seventh Tradition we have never been diverted from our primary purpose of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers — wherever he or she may be. This is the fundamental work of Alcoholics Anonymous, and to ensure that the hand of A.A. will always remain outstretched, money and spirituality must continue to mix. And for that, we are all responsible.

(Pamphlet: “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix”)



(The Twelve Traditions Illustrated)