

An Opportunity for Service

The architects of our General Service Structure, Bill Wilson and Bernard Smith, both recognized and often encouraged AA to take its inventory. Therefore, this comes as an open invitation to do just that. Examine the issues raised, do your own research, and offer your ideas, or those of your area, to help keep Alcoholics Anonymous on its true spiritual course. We are all responsible!

In recognition of the valued role our non-alcoholic trustees play in Alcoholics Anonymous, especially that of the Chairman of the General Service Board, this communication is being sent. Please remember that past Chairmen of the General Service Board remain (in an emeritus standing) valued members of the General Service Board and the General Service Conference until death. It is within this context that this communication takes place.

The attached letter from Gordon Patrick does not stand as a single event. Over the years, Gordon has made many attempts to make his concerns heard by several General Service Boards. In each attempt, the General Service Board has declined to carry out his request. As a last resort, this latest letter simply asks that Gordon's name no longer be associated with Alcoholics Anonymous due to his belief that our General Service Board no longer consistently operates in accordance with AA principle.

As you will see from the attached outline, which highlights Gordon Patrick's service to Alcoholics Anonymous, his dedication to our society and its well-being has spanned many years. Through his leadership as Trustee Emeritus of the General Service Board, Gordon's request to inventory past actions provides an opportunity to be of maximum service to God while preserving AA's spiritual heritage.

Gordon Patrick

Information on a Past Class A Trustee

Professional Experience

- ❖ Served with the Red Cross in WW II
- ❖ President Gordon Patrick Associates specializing in occupational alcoholism
- ❖ Member – Addiction Research Foundation - Ontario, Canada
- ❖ Consultant to Donwood Institute
- ❖ Member – Association of Labor-Management Administrators and Consultants on Alcoholism
- ❖ Senior Consultant – Beach & Portner Ltd.
- ❖ Senior Consultant – Drake Beam Morin Canada, Inc

A.A. Experience

- Elected to the General Service Board – 1975
- Elected General Service Board Chairman – 1982 to 1988
- Initiated “Challenge of the Seventh Tradition” in order to bring GSO & the GSB back in line with AA tradition.

Committee service

- 1980: Chair – Trustees C.P.C. Committee
Trustees Literature Committee
Trustees Treatment Facilities Committee
- 1981: Chair – Trustees Treatment Facilities Committee
Trustees Literature Committee
Trustees C.P.C. Committee
- 1982: Chair – Trustees Treatment Facilities Committee
Trustees Archives Committee
Trustees C.P.C. Committee

Attended: 13 General Service Conferences
3 International Conventions
(At the time of his rotation in 1988.) 50 General Service Board Meetings
30 Regional Forums
Did not miss a single AA commitment during his term of service.

Quotes from his closing talk at his last Conference:

◆ *“We are now struggling to learn how to deal with success.”*

◆ *Now I would like to share a few thoughts about the future. If the thoughts from my experience appear to you unreal or heresy, just remember I am a still-practicing non-alcoholic . . . a friend! Trusted servants require timely, accurate, factual information in a digestible form.”*

◆ *A word or two about checks and balances: Our service structure — Traditions, Concepts, and Charter — provides a marvelous system of checks and balances. Just recently,*

however, we discovered what appears to be a flaw in one of the checks that caused some distress to the General Service Board. Now, in the particular situation we encountered, the checks and balances appeared quite adequate, but we found a flaw. The procedures we are bound by do not take into account the need for prompt, decisive, corrective action. The delay in taking the necessary action created hardship for some employees and controversy within the Fellowship, as well as substantial financial loss.

The problem is now resolved and steps taken to prevent a recurrence. I am convinced, however, that unless we can “fix” this apparent flaw in the checks and balances in our present structure, we may be faced with a similar situation in the future.

Of course, a proper set of checks and balances is crucial. Let me quote from Bill’s introduction to the Concepts: “Well knowing our propensity for power driving, it is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of ‘checks and balances’. We have to face the fact that we usually try to enlarge our own authority and prestige when we are in the saddle. But when we are not, we strenuously resist a heavy-handed management wherein someone else holds the reins. (Twelve Concepts page 4)

◆ *Regarding inventories (A.A. style), several weeks ago, a Panel 26 delegate called me to talk about his concerns regarding the increasingly heavy demands now being made on trustees, directors, and the General Service Office staff. This was a positive, constructive discussion with an overriding thought, which I would like to share with you. The thought is about inventories. The past delegate talked about surveys or studies to reexamine the entire service structure of Alcoholics Anonymous! (I thought, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.”) I was quickly assured by my caller, however, that he did not expect immediate action, but was only suggesting the beginning of a process which may take years to complete. Each level of our service structure . . . from G.S.R.s through to trustees and staff, reexamine their function in keeping with their mandate within our Traditions, Concepts, and Charter. In other words, “inventory-taking,” but with results fed back to the Conference so that there would be, in effect, a US/Canada service structure inventory.*

◆ *Let me quote now in closing from Bern Smith’s remarks to what was then the largest A.A. assembly in history. As 10,000 people listened to, Bern said: “You have something great and awesome going for you. Treat it tenderly, respect what it has done for you and what it can do for others . . . As long as one man dwells in the darkness you once knew, you cannot rest; you must try to find him and help him become one of you . . . By the Grace of God, may Alcoholics Anonymous last for all time.*

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XXXXX XXX XXX
(address edited for privacy)

July 7, 2003

Dr. Elaine McDowell, PhD
Chair, General Service Board
6631 Hunters Wood Circle
Baltimore, MD 21228
USA

Dear Elaine:

As a Trustee Emeritus and former Chairman of the Board, it is with regret that I request that all references to my name and my service be removed from all AA publications, publicity or announcements. This is not a request I make lightly. The use of my name by AA World Services implies that I endorse its policies and programs and, by implication, vouch for its integrity. This, in all conscience, I can no longer do.

Over the years, the Board and the Conference have been very serious about taking action in the letter and spirit of the concepts. When strains and disconnections became apparent, these were taken very seriously and discussed at length until a consensus about their resolution was made. This process seems to be breaking down in alarming ways.

I have voiced my concerns about what I see as questionable and possibly destructive practices of the Board, which have not been given the attention they warrant. Not only are the immediate strains they cause not addressed but also their long-term implications for how AA operates are ignored. Those most troubling to me are:

1. The abrogation of the core AA principle of rotation. One major aspect of the principle of rotation has been to ensure that no single person or aggregate of persons can accumulate undue power and influence over what goes on in AA. The power resides in AA groups and in the Conference. Yet, for example, the rotation principle does not apply to non-trustee committee members. No serious consideration has been given to the implications of this omission. Because such non-trustee committee members are chosen for their expertise, long entrenched members exert undue influence on committee decisions. In addition, some former trustees and AA members who have been employees of GSO have not effectively rotated and have continued to exert influence on AAWS functioning and policies.

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2. The definition of who shall exert influence on AA and the processes by which appointments are made to the service structure are defined. Yet "in-town" AA members have a kind of "back door" access to and influence on the service structure. That such access is not acceptable to AA as a whole was made clear when the Conference voted to change the qualifications of the general Service Trustees some years ago, the change being made to cope with exactly the same kind of problem.
3. The Board's unresponsiveness to serious trustee concerns about Board decisions, committee behaviors, the GSO, and the long-term implications of its actions. A somewhat recent, though not unique, example was the Board changing a decision made by one of its Committees. The concerned trustee felt so strongly about this that he resigned in protest, and later sought reinstatement, which was denied.

Destructive behavior of the Board in dealing with serious AA problems or failure to take action is not in keeping with the principles of AA. I have made my concerns known, hoping they would lead to discussion and resolution. All my concerns have been ignored. Therefore, will you please accede to my request to remove my name from AA's publications of all kinds? This drastic action is prompted by the forthcoming 2005 Toronto Convention.

I am sorry, Elaine, to have lost touch with you, but I have followed your activities as Chair by way of regional forums and AA publications. You have been doing the fine job I knew you would.

My best regards,

Gordon M. Patrick

FYI

I have been informed by Elaine McDowell PhD the February 2004 meeting will consider my request for the creation of a Board of Enquiry to investigate our concerns.

Gordon Patrick Trustee Emeritus January 20 2004
(This request was denied *ed.*)