

Area 41 - Nebraska

Delegate

December 3, 2009

Conference Coordinator
475 Riverside Drive
New York, New York

RE: Background material

Dear Adrienne:

During the 2009 General Service Conference there was a floor action to recommit the following item to the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature:

The committee recommended that the trustees' Committee on Literature develop a questionnaire to gather input from the Fellowship on whether there is a need to develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on the topics of spirituality, and agnostics or atheists/nonbelievers in A.A., and that a report which includes a summary of the results from the responses to the questionnaire be presented to the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature.

The above item was reported as reflected above, although I would suspect it will be worded differently when sent to the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature in an effort to stay in context and make sense in light of time frames.

The issue of a new pamphlet for the purpose noted above was discussed over the 2009 summer in Area 41, and the Area 41 Literature Committee recommended to the entire area that we express our view that such a pamphlet should not be considered nor survey or questionnaire be conducted. Area 41 voted with substantial unanimity to accept the recommendation of its Literature Committee.

It should also be noted that there was some confusion as to whether or not the item recommitted to the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature concerned gathering responses from a questionnaire or producing the pamphlet. We considered both, and would appreciate our considerations and viewpoint being included in the background material for the General Service Conference agenda item to be considered by the 2010 General Service Conference Committee on Literature.

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Lest there be misunderstanding, I wish to point out that I heard no discussion or support for barring atheists or agnostics from Alcoholics Anonymous, or any other such nonsense that may be construed as being fearful or disapproving of those whose beliefs differ from most in Area 41. The concerns expressed were varied but centered around three main points. The following points express what I heard, with no particular prioritization:

- A. **Alcoholics Anonymous doesn't need yet another pamphlet.** We have pamphlets for various races and ethnic groups; we have pamphlets professing to be guides to A.A., glances at A.A., and information on A.A. Additionally we have a pamphlet entitled "Do You Think You're Different?" as well as "Is A.A. for You," and "Is A.A. for Me." Do we really want to start making pamphlets on spirituality too? We understand only one is being talked about, but how soon will it be before we have a pamphlet addressing Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, or the non-denominational? Considering our history, we don't think it will be long. We don't want to go there, and besides, the topic is addressed other places in A.A. literature. Spirituality is the topic of *Come to Believe*. There is a chapter in our basic text entitled "We Agnostics." We believe any pamphlet should cover topics only if they are not already well-covered elsewhere. That isn't the case here. There was a point brought up at the 59th General Service Conference that the chapter "We Agnostics" in *Alcoholics Anonymous* is condescending. Do we really think we are going to produce a pamphlet that improves on our basic text? We think not.
- B. **The proposed pamphlet or questionnaire is not conducive to unity.** Many of our pamphlets aren't. Our sponsors pointed out early on that we should look for the similarities and not the differences. We spend time telling newcomers that their case is not different. So that we can then hand them a pamphlet with their supposed difference on the cover? Surely not! We are alcoholics. Period. We sense an ever-growing movement toward "We African-American Alcoholics," or "We Women Alcoholics," or "We GLBT Alcoholics," and now "We Atheist and Agnostic Alcoholics," and we think such a movement divides "We Alcoholics."
- C. **We will carry a diluted message.** A few quotes from *Alcoholics Anonymous* follow. Many more could have been selected:
- p. 68 – "We never apologize for God."
 - p. 44 – "To one who feels as he atheist or agnostic, such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster."
 - p. 59 – "3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him.*"
 - p. 10 – "I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, who knew neither time nor limitation."

The message of Alcoholics Anonymous that we try to carry includes all of the above. Step 3 is part of our message. The word "God" is used throughout the book and in many of our meetings. If some have found a way out that doesn't include these things, we are happy for them, and would never begrudge them sobriety. As newcomers however, many of us were looking for any solution other than that offered in our basic text. To have a pamphlet handy to give them hope that they may find a solution without thoroughly following our

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path is contrary to the basic message of hope carried by our Fellowship.

Thank you for considering these matters discussed in Nebraska for several months, and we hope you will contemplate these points during discussion at the 60th General Service Conference. "May God bless you and keep you. Until then." - p. 164
Alcoholics Anonymous.

With warm regards,



Lori Geistlinger
Delegate Panel 58, Area 41 Nebraska

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