

January 1966

**Unusual and Important!***About the new***TRUSTEES' PROGRAM**

*Some background notes concerning a program for the future of AA's General Service Board, which is presented and discussed by Dr. John L. Norris, the Board's Chairman, and by Bill, AA's co-founder, on the following seventeen pages of this Grapevine.*

**W**E begin this New Year's issue of the AA Grapevine with a presentation of several related articles of unusual importance. These articles, by Dr. John L. Norris, and Bill, concern AA "structure," not always a subject of the greatest interest to someone who has only recently joined us, and not always, truth to tell, sufficiently the concern of those of us who have been around a while.

But the proposal which Dr. Norris makes here, and which Bill endorses, bears weightily on the question of AA solidarity and leadership, and ultimately on the sobriety of each of us, which depends on AA unity and effectiveness. We hope therefore, that you will read and reflect on the proposed change in the General Service Board make-up, de-

scribed on the following pages, before turning to the more usual Grapevine stories of personal experience, and insight in living the AA way, which comprise the balance of our issue.

As a reminder: AA's New York "General Service Office" consists of two nonprofit corporations: AA World Services and the AA Grapevine. They are responsible to the General Service Board of, at present ten nonalcoholic (Class A) Trustees and nine alcoholic (Class B) Trustees. In addition, AA's General Service Conference, made up of eighty-eight Delegates representing U.S. and Canadian AA Groups, assists in the guidance of AA's world service efforts and the publishing programs. It meets once a year, in April. At each Annual Conference,

General Service Trustees, Delegates and Staff review the year past, plan the next, discuss problems, and establish service guidelines to meet the needs of AA groups.

The emergence, during thirty years, of this three-sided means of providing leadership for AA's World Services has been a gradual evolution from need toward fulfill-

ment — toward efficacy in carrying the message. The pages which follow propose another step in that vital evolution.

The Trustees have already voted sixteen to one (1 abstaining, 1 vacancy) in favor of the program for change which Dr. Norris presents here. The Conference Delegates are to vote on it in April of this year.

*The Editors*

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## Trustees' Program for Structuring the General Service Board

*As presented to the 1965 General Service Conference  
by John L. Norris, M.D., Chairman*

**A**S the Fellowship moves into its 30th year and the Board into its 27th, we have undertaken to assess the present Board structure and to make specific recommendations for the Board's foreseeable future. We realize that no actions taken by the Trustees or by the Conference are forever binding. In fact, it will prove desirable in the future to re-

view Board structure at regular intervals and make whatever changes new experience or changing circumstances make necessary.

The Board believes that we should start some changes in Board structure which will take some time to complete. The program, if approved by next year's (1966) Conference, after a year of study, **will**



result in a newly composed Board not earlier than 1967 — five years after the last modifications in Board structure were approved by the Conference.

There are a number of principles involved in these changes — from the one that affirms the desirability of placing the AA Fellowship in primary charge of its world affairs — to the one that expresses the security that many have felt in a nonalcoholic majority. There have been many different attitudes toward modification of the present structure expressed in and out of our Conference halls. And many different *shades* of opinion. Some believed that change was desirable but the time was not right. Others were opposed to any change.

Now the Board has asked me to present some proposals to the Conference and to ask you to consider them for one year, voting on them in 1966. All of these proposals

have been thoroughly discussed with Bill and have his full approval.

Before these were drawn up, both Class A and Class B members of the Board spent considerable time reviewing Board structure and the actions of previous Conferences affecting structural changes. Your Trustees undertook to assess all the factors involved, dispassionately and practically—with these conclusions:

#### Mixed Board

1. The concept of a "mixed" Board — that is, both nonalcoholics and alcoholics — is a good one and should be continued. But there is no longer any need for a "majority of one" nonalcoholics. Remember that when the Board was organized this way nobody had had more than three years of sobriety. Last year's Conference Delegates averaged eleven years of active membership in AA. We



believe that a proportion of one-third nonalcoholics to two-thirds alcoholics will preserve the benefits of the mixed Board while it meets the needs of a growing movement. This will, moreover, express internally and to the public our high regard for the counsel of our nonalcoholic friends.

#### Board Chairmanship

2. The present bylaw which makes the Board Chairmanship open to either a nonalcoholic or alcoholic should be unchanged. The Board should remain free to select as its Chairman the Trustee who in its judgment could best carry this responsibility.

#### Class A Rotation



3. We have examined the practicability of a rotation plan for Class A Trustees and believe that the following changes are desirable

but with the clear understanding that members of the April 1966 Board are not to be affected by these changes:

a. There should be established for Class A Trustees a three-year term which may be followed by two successive three-year terms—nine years in all.

b. There should be a six-year term for the Chairman but this tenure should not be restricted by the 3-3-3 terms of Class A Trustees. Thus, conceivably, a Class A Trustee might serve nine years and then become Chairman, in which case his tenure would continue for another six years.

#### Regional Class B Trustees

4. The Board has also examined the method of selection and the functioning of Class B Trustees — the alcoholic Board members. The Regional Trustee electoral system was approved by the 1962 Conference and the elections of 1963

and 1964 have shown the merits of this procedure. We believe that we are now ready:

a. To improve year-round liaison between Board and membership by expanding the four U.S. Regional Trusteeships to five, and the one Canadian Regional Trusteeship to two.

b. To follow the same Regional Electoral system for the U.S. which then would give each U.S. Region two four-year terms with a two-year gap rather than the present one four-year term with a two-year gap.

c. To ask Canada to set up two Regions to include all provinces; then to apply the U.S. electoral system but with no gap between four-year terms.

#### General Service Class B Trustees

5. The Board believes that the policy of having four Class B General Service Trustees has been very important to the prudent stewardship of the Fellowship—and particularly the General Service Office. These Trustees (sometimes known as New York or "in-town" Trustees) have been selected by the Nominating Committee for their specialized business and professional experience—capabilities that are needed in handling the affairs of a growing movement. Guided by the success of this method of selection, the Board suggests:

a. That the number of this type of Trustee be increased from four to seven; and that four of these seven continue to come from the New York commuting area while the other three come from anywhere in the U.S. and Canada.

b. That the General Service Trustees from the New York commuting area be nominated and elected as they now are.

c. That the General Service Trustees from outside New York be elected as follows: The Board would set up "specifications" to cover the kind of business and professional qualifications needed to fill a vacancy. All states and provinces would be asked to submit qualified names at least six months before the April Conference. The Conference Committees on Trustees would be invited to meet with the Trustees' Nominating Committee in joint session at the time of the January Board meeting to discuss the entire slate and to reduce it to four names. At the Conference annual meeting, the entire Conference would use Third Legacy procedures to select one name for election by the Board.

#### Size of Board

6. The structural modifications we have discussed now add up to a 21-man Board compared to the present 19. When all changes

have come about, the Board will be made up of:

Seven nonalcoholic (Class A) compared to ten today.

Seven Regional Trustees (Class B — 5 U.S. — 2 Canadian) compared to four U.S. and one Canadian today.

Seven General Service Trustees (Class B — 4 N.Y. — 3 U.S. and Canada) compared with four from N.Y. today.

#### Timetable

7. The Board believes that a calm, deliberate approach to these changes is essential. This is the timetable that your Trustees offer as part of these proposals:

a. First, a clear understanding that no Class A Trustees on the Board when the Conference votes on the plan are to be affected by the changed procedures and tenures; that changes will be put into effect only after there are Class A vacancies resulting from death or normal retirement.

b. Then, that this plan be taken home by all members of the 1965 Conference, considered for one year, and then voted on at the 1966 Annual Meeting of the Conference.

c. Should the 1966 Conference accept the plan by a two-thirds or better majority, then the composition of the Board would take shape in this order:

The two additional Regional Trustees would be added by the

1967 Conference. The increase in Board size from 19 to 21 would provide this room.

Class A Trusteeships would be set at seven when, through normal attrition, this number was reached.

Then the three General Service Trustees from outside New York would be elected.

#### Four Proposals

The proposal that the Conference is being asked to consider for one year and to vote on in 1966 can be simply expressed:

1. That the General Service Board be increased to twenty-one, of whom seven shall be nonalcoholic and fourteen alcoholic.
2. That the alcoholic Trustees be: Seven Regional — five from U.S. and two from Canada. Seven General Service Trustees—four from New York commuting area and three from anywhere in U.S. and/or Canada.
3. That Class A Trusteeships follow a rotation plan of 3-3-3 years but that the Chairman's tenure of six years be independent of his service as a Trustee.
4. That the Board incorporate the bylaw changes necessary to provide for Class A rotation and for the additional Regional and General Service Trustees.

We entrust these proposals to your good judgment.

*John L. Norris, M.D.  
Chairman, General Service Board*

