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We Do Argue This Question

AT THE BOTTOM of page 102 in the Big Book is this sentence: "We never argue this question." The question is, in effect: To what extent should members of Alcoholics Anonymous shield themselves from booze?

Let's go to a meeting. The speaker's story is sincere and interesting. The listeners are still and attentive as these lines reach them toward the end of his lead: "I still serve booze to my friends and relatives. I keep a bottle in my home. I lunch and dine with drinking friends in places where liquor is sold. This does not bother me."

At the end of the talk, the chairman says, as is customary in this area, "The meeting is now open for comments."

Almost invariably, the subject the speaker has dared to touch upon brings some disagreement, even reprimands, such as "My advice is that you stay in dry places" or "Good lead, except for . . ." or "Thanks for your lead, but would you keep a rattlesnake in your closet?"

Such remarks cause embarrassment and chagrin to the speaker — a shabby return indeed for his earnest effort to share his experience, strength, and hope. And such open confrontations must surely impress the new member unfavorably. Here is not the oneness of purpose in the Fellowship that he was led to expect and so sorely needs. I'm sure most of us have encountered such unpleasantness at some time.

Then, with the coffee and fellowship, you find several little groups debating the subject. You'll hear these remarks: "I knew a guy who threw away over ten years of sobriety — got mad one day and grabbed for the bottle right there in his house"; "Yeah? Well, I know a guy never allowed a bottle in the house and got drunk anyway. Dumped eight years. You want a bottle, you'll find one!"; "I have almost twenty years, and I've always had booze and beer on hand for my company. I ain't aimin' to change *their* lifestyle"; and in answer to that, "Watch it! You might not make twenty"; then from an elder states-

man (this, I rather like), "You don't take the bottle away from the man — you take the man away from the bottle." And so it goes — wasted words, futile and disruptive. (That was not a factual report of any one meeting, but a fairly representative composite of many such.)

What does the Big Book say about all this? I beg leave to quote some of its lines (pages 100 to 103):

"Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink . . . Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so. . . . In our belief any scheme of combating

alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure. . . . Many of us keep liquor in our homes. . . . Some of us still serve it to our friends provided they are not alcoholic. But some of us think we should not serve liquor to anyone. We never argue this question. We feel that each family, in the light of their own circumstances, ought to decide for themselves."

Surely, there is no room for controversy among us who have the great gift of this program, received through the grace of God and drawing its strength from the sharing with our fellows and the love of the Giver.

"We never argue this question." Peace.

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