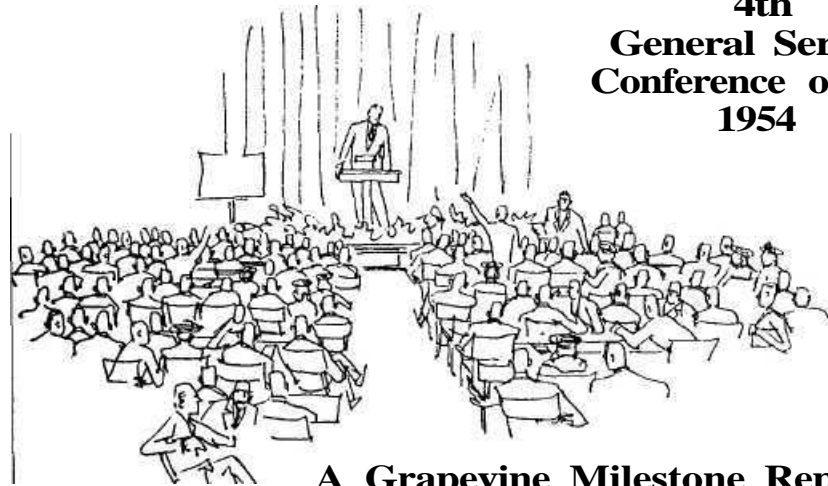


June 1954

4th General Service Conference of AA 1954



A Grapevine Milestone Report

DESCRIBED by Bill W. as "a cross-roads Conference," the Fourth Annual General Service Conference of AA met in New York April 21-25 with seventy-five Delegates from the U. S. and Canada attending. Members of General Service Headquarters and *Grapevine* staffs and Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation also participated.

Nine proposals set before the Conference were acted upon in accordance with opinions expressed in pre-Conference group meetings throughout the United States and Canada. In addition, the Delegates agreed to present AA's Third Legacy of Service to the movement as a whole at a twentieth anniversary international convention of AA, to be held next year, immediately after the Fifth General Service Conference and open to all AAs throughout the world,

in a city to be selected by a committee appointed by the Conference.

In ten separate sessions at the Hotel Commodore, the Delegates reviewed the entire financial structure of AA, the work of the General Service office, *The Grapevine*, AA publishing, and questions affecting AA as a whole.

At one historic session on April 23rd, Headquarters, *Grapevine* and Trustee representatives withdrew from the Conference, while Delegates met "on their own." Among other subjects considered at this session was the problem of building a prudent financial reserve for the continuance of national and international service functions in the event of a depression or recession. After a thorough discussion, the Delegates agreed overwhelmingly to discontinue discounts on books sold to groups,

which means that the groups will pay full retail prices to AA Publishing. This action, later confirmed by the full Conference, takes effect July 1, 1954. The plan is to build up the reserve fund, which now stands at about one year's operating expense, to the amount needed for approximately three years, thereby protecting AA's service headquarters against any possible emergency.

GREETINGS FROM BILL

In his opening remarks of greeting to the Delegates, Bill W. expressed his confidence that the Conference itself would be the actual successor to the founders of AA as custodian of the program and its services.

One full day was devoted to reports on General Service operations from the staffs of General Service Headquarters, *The Grapevine*, AA Publishing, and the Board of Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation. Some highlights:

Last year, the service staff processed 34,000 separate pieces of incoming mail and sent out more than 120,000 pieces of mail and 16,718 packages. These packages included 23,296 AA books; 29,567 copies of "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions"; 547,000 pamphlets; 243 sets of records; 157,000 wallet cards.

"This Is AA" was the most popular pamphlet last year. A total of 85,600 copies was distributed. Other pamphlet best-sellers were "44 Questions and Answers" (78,320 copies) and "Medicine Looks At AA" (36,940).

AA maintained the Tradition of "attraction rather than promotion" in pub-



lic relations. More than 600 inquiries were received from members of the clergy, the medical profession, students and representatives of industry. Headquarters continued to help writers and editors in checking factual references to AA in their manuscripts. To cite one of many examples, AA staffers assisted a writer of the New York Daily News in preparing four articles, which resulted in an enormous number of inquiries.

MEMBERSHIP GROWS

In the year ending March 31, 435 new groups were registered at Headquarters, provided with literature and the Handbook and added to the active mailing list, bringing the total of groups throughout the world to 5,401.

AA groups outside the U. S. and Canada now number 354 in 58 countries, and have an approximate membership of 9,360, an increase of about

2,000 for the year. Prison groups increased from 176 to 234 and their membership now totals more than 12,000, an increase of 3,000 over a year ago. Hospital groups increased from 101 to 154. Total worldwide membership as reported in the 1954 Directory of AA Groups is 128,296.

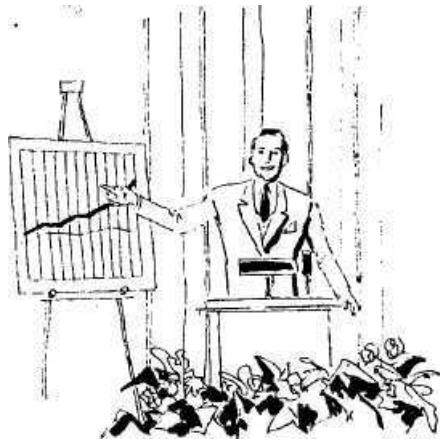
The *AA Grapevine* operated in the black for the third straight year, Editor Sig S. told the Delegates. In the past two years its earlier deficit of \$28,000 has been reduced by \$10,000. Circulation is up to 29,953.

TRUSTEE REPLACEMENTS

Bernard B. Smith, non-alcoholic Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, reported these changes on the Board:

Cliff W. replaced Jerry M., deceased; Daniel H. replaced Hank G., resigned; Sig S. replaced Tom Y., term expired; Sig H. nominated to replace Jonas A., term expired.

Hank G. has been engaged as a paid staff member, on a part time basis, as General Service Manager, acting as President of AA Publishing, Inc. and as Chairman of the General Service Committee.



As policy sessions got under way, the Conference also:

- Approved a motion to change the name of The Alcoholic Foundation to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. The new name, it was agreed, would more accurately and clearly reflect its actual functions. The Foundation is no longer a charitable enterprise; it is simply the custodial arm of the General Service Conference.

- Agreed that there was no need for delegates who have completed their terms to return in 1955 as members of an enlarged Conference to decide the



Be it resolved . . .

From the conference Report: "At this session of the General Service Conference, attended only by area Delegates, this being the only means and method we have of conveying our heartfelt sentiments, it was moved":

That this General Service Conference extends to Bill W. our love, admiration, appreciation, and deep gratitude for his untiring efforts over the years in leading us into this way of life which has brought to us indescribable peace of mind, contentment, happiness, and serenity, and we hope and pray for him and Lois good health and many, many years of inspirational service; and, without naming the members of the General Service Staff, to them and every clerk and other employee who have done such a magnificent job in carrying the message to the untold thousands who are yet sick and who do not know, and for the guidance, help, and inspiration they have given to each and every AA, our heartfelt thanks, and, we especially desire to express to Bernard Smith our sincere appreciation and gratitude for his wise counsel, guidance and help, and to each member of the Board of Trustees, our gratitude for the magnificent job they have done in carrying on. And, be it further resolved that this resolution be spread upon the minutes of this Conference and a copy of it printed in the earliest issue of the Grapevine.

future of the Third Legacy of Service.

- Decided not to produce a pamphlet dealing with conditions and attitudes that lead to slips. It was felt that the subject might be handled in other ways. The Conference also voted not to publish a pamphlet, "Religion Looks At AA," as possibly controversial.

THE SENSE OF THE CONFERENCE

The 1954 Conference had two distinguishing marks, according to "The Sense of the Conference," a draft report distributed to Delegates on the final day:

"Perhaps the first dominant theme, never actually expressed in so many words, was the fact that the movement seemed to have achieved a larger measure of self-confidence in its ability to accept and direct the Third Legacy of Service. Bill and Dr. Bob, the Trustees and the Service Headquarters staff had always hoped that such a confidence would materialize—which it certainly now has. They had felt that the fellowship, now crossing the threshold of maturity, should be abundantly endowed with collective wisdom, in matters both spiritual and material, fully to assure

the survival and successful functioning of AA.

NEW ATMOSPHERE NOTED

"But to many AAs themselves, in previous years, this concept had been totally new, totally untried. This year there was a new and completely confident note in many of the discussions.

"As one Delegate phrased it: The movement is no longer afraid to take on its share of the great responsibilities it now has come to understand and accept.'

"Perhaps the second mark was

linked, like a shadow, to the first one. For in expressing its self-confidence, the Conference again and again demonstrated its awareness that, in AA, responsibility is always composed of two important elements: responsibility to respect local autonomy and responsibility to assure the functioning and survival of the movement itself....

"If they indeed represented the 'sense of the Conference,' the twin themes of confidence and responsibility spell the promise of a truly magnificent future of service for the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous."