

*A question raised at the
1978 General Service Conference
is a vital one for all of us*

Are We Letting Others Do Our Work?

WITHIN AA, concern is often expressed over the steadily increasing number of agencies in the alcoholism field. Are such agencies taking over our work? This topic might be compared to the weather. We keep talking about it, and we are wasting time on such debate, because there is nothing we can do about it. The "others" are here to stay. Let's cooperate with the treatment facilities, the detox centers — the "others." We need them.

The more important question is: Are we *letting* others do our work? There is no way that the "others" can do for the sick and suffering alcoholic what we, the recovering alcoholics, can do. Our threefold malady must be treated in all three areas to effect full recovery from our "seemingly hopeless state of mind and body."

We can assist "others" to do *their* work by placing the sick alcoholic in

a treatment facility so that he will not die, so that he can recover physically; so that we can then do *our* work by trying to carry the message of recovery to a healthier, more receptive individual.

The fact that our co-founder Bill was led to none other than a medical doctor was part of the great miracle of our Fellowship. As an MD, Dr. Bob treated many early AAs, without charge, for the physical part of our threefold malady—*but* he always remembered that he must return again and again to help the newcomer with the other two areas of our disease. These are the emotions or mental quirks that only another alcoholic can identify with, and the spiritual disintegration that only another alcoholic can comprehend. Let's not shirk our sponsorship responsibility in these areas.

Let the "others" do their work. Let the "others" dry out our pros-

pect. Let the "others" clean and feed our prospect physically. But let us be there to talk with him, and walk with him from his recovery room to an AA contact, to an AA meeting, and to a new way of life.

After many years of complaining that we have no place to take the drunk, we now do have a place—and we do take him there. Then, often, we feel we have done our job. Let "them" handle it. But we know that when he is released from any institution, he needs a guiding hand and heart, or he will head for the bottle, where he instinctively knows he will find comfort. Let's be there to offer that guiding hand and heart.

Too often, the hand and heart of AA are no longer there, and some of us old-timers are letting this happen, because we don't stress to the younger member that his sobriety depends largely upon his carrying the *message—not the body*. The newer member is detox-oriented and is ready, at the ring of the phone, to taxi the new guy to the nearest facility. We, as older members, feel we have done our part. We have "baby-sat" for hours on end, administered the honey and the TLC, carried the body, and then tried to carry the message; now, we feel it's time for newer members to have their turn. But let's urge them to use Chapter 7 of the Big Book, "Working With Others," where we are told, "You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail.... Helping others is the

foundation stone of your recovery."

We older members should remind the newer member of his responsibility as a sponsor; that as a sponsor, he is "a leader. The stakes are about as big as they could be. A human life and usually the happiness of a whole family hang in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, . . . how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example—these qualities of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death." Bill wrote that for us in discussing the Ninth Concept.

Let us not be a taxi service to and from treatment centers, nor a clerk handling an alcoholic's admission to the hospital of his choice; let us not enable the drinking prospect to continue his path of destruction, nor enable him to continue his search for the "easier, softer way." The "others," too, have found that the easier, softer way is enabling the drunk to stay drunk, and they are reluctant to readmit the repeaters, the perennial "slippers."

Many alcoholism counselors are very good at their profession and do try in their professional capacity to help the alcoholic. They seem to do it best when they are able to convince the prospect that the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps of AA offer the total sobriety that will enable him "to become happily and usefully whole."

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