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*Let's see what the
Big Book has to
say about*

Reaching the Public

LATELY, THERE HAS been much discussion about the pros and cons of AA public information and much difference of opinion about where attraction ends and promotion begins.

I definitely agree that our public relations policy should be based on attraction rather than promotion, but sometimes, when people say that public information efforts violate the Traditions, I suspect that they are in reality using the Traditions as a salve on their consciences, to soothe their guilt over not getting involved.

While it is true that some local PI efforts may seem to promote AA, I think that most criticism of PI work is unjustified. I have heard this criticism in its mildest form (arguments over semantic technicalities) all the way up to the belief that anything other than individual Twelfth Step work is promotion and should be stopped.

These differences of opinion are probably valuable, but I would like to ask some questions of those who

think that all PI work should be stopped. I am sure all of us would benefit by answering the following:

1. Chapter 7, page 89, of the Big Book says: "Perhaps you are not acquainted with any drinkers who want to recover. You can easily find some by asking a few doctors, ministers, priests or hospitals." Aren't doctors, ministers, priests, and hospital staffs part of the public? How are we supposed to get such people to cooperate with us if we don't tell them what AA is? Would you help if you didn't even know what AA was?

2. Chapter 8, page 104, says: "We want the wives of Alcoholics Anonymous to address the wives of men who drink too much. What they say will apply to nearly everyone bound by ties of blood or affection to an alcoholic." Aren't wives, husbands, and relatives part of the public? How are we supposed to reach the families of alcoholics if we don't have public information to tell them who, what, and where we are?

3. Chapter 10, page 147, says: "If your organization is a large one, your junior executives might be provided with this book." Aren't employers and junior executives part of the public? How are we supposed to get employers to read the Big Book if we don't have public information work to inform the employer in the first place?

4. Why were the chapters "To Wives" and "To Employers" included in the Big Book, if they weren't meant to be used for public information?

5. If the Big Book itself is not intended for public information, why did the writers recommend that we show it to all these people and let them read it?

6. Since the Big Book asks us to encourage all these non-AAs to read the Big Book, aren't the chapters "To Wives" and "To Employers," and thus the Big Book itself, promoting AA according to one way of thinking? If the public wasn't supposed to be informed about AA, why did the early AAs finish the foreword to the first edition of the Big Book with the sentence "Inquiry by scientific, medical, and religious societies will be welcomed"?

7. Should we rewrite the Big Book and leave out those chapters and that last sentence? Do you honestly believe that all the drunks who have been helped by AA *would* have been helped if AA had been a secret society? Can you honestly say that

you came to AA because of the efforts of AA members alone, and that no member of the "public" helped? Finally, now that you are in AA, do you honestly think it is fair that a drunk out there must wait for you to come and twelfth-step him? Or don't you think public information might help him to find us?

I could go on and on, showing places in the Big Book, *AA Comes of Age*, the "Twelve and Twelve," and articles by Bill W. in the Grapevine to affirm that not only do we need public information, but the founders of AA expected us to help the still-suffering alcoholic by letting the public know that we exist and that they should send him to us.

If you're still opposed to AA's doing public information work, ask yourself why. Are you making excuses for not supporting PI work? And are your excuses good enough to keep you from getting drunk, as you surely will if our Fellowship dies because we didn't carry the message to the public?

"Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety." "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion ..." We can draw the line between attraction and promotion, but we can't expect the suffering alcoholic to find us if we don't tell him where we are!

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