



# Our Primary Purpose Forum

## The Voice of the Alcoholics Anonymous Minority Opinion

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**“The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority.” (From Bill’s comments on Concept V “The Right of Appeal.”)**

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### **Alcoholics Anonymous at the Crossroads**

Royal F. Sheppard was an alcoholic Trustee on the Board of the Alcoholic Foundation. The following letter is from him to Leonard V. Harrison, the Chairman of the Alcoholic Foundation Board. Royal just may have been the first ‘minority opinion’ Trustee on the Board. We know that Dr. Bob and especially Clarence Snyder were among the first minority opinion folks as they early on expressed concern over the practices and policies of the New York Headquarters.

Royal may have been a majority opinion in A.A. at the time about the issues he discusses in the letter but we have no way of knowing because the Alcoholic Foundation took actions that were not discussed among the fellowship, much like the policy today. The letter is about organizing A.A. and the beginning of the Conference process, which was opposed by Royal and I suspect many in the fellowship at that time.

One very interesting point about this letter is if A.A. adopted these ideas that were already being implemented by the groups at the time and followed the vision set forth by Royal then in my opinion we would not be where we are today with the problems and events discussed among the minority opinion members and groups. Royal discussed the problems that would occur with such an ‘organization’ being established and how it would affect our spiritual future. One of these key points is the vision that as A.A. grew the autonomous groups and intergroups would provide most of the service needs and the NY Headquarters would decentralize. It would seem that A.A. might have been better off if this issue was discussed at length throughout the fellowship for a time, even if that meant a couple years, instead of the unthinking acceptance of a the plan of a few members to organize A.A. into their own shortsighted vision. This vision of the organizers seems to have come about by a ‘lack of faith’ in God as He expresses Himself through the autonomous groups and the belief that the autonomous groups were not capable of providing the needed services to alcoholics. It may also have also been just a conscious effort at control. I personally don’t believe it was an original idea of Bill W. but rather I think his personal desire for success could have been easily manipulated.

I am currently investigating some influences on AA from some very powerful people that are all connected to each other. There is some information that I have had difficulty finding like; what firm did Bill work for on

Wall Street, and what was Hank P.'s position at Standard Oil of New Jersey? If any one has information about this please email me at [oppf@aamo.info](mailto:oppf@aamo.info).

Dennis M. Co-Editor

Letter from Royal S.

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Mr. Leonard V. Harrison  
[Alcoholic Foundation]  
105 East 22nd Street  
New York, New York  
Dear Mr. Harrison:

I have examined the prospectus, dated November 1950, entitled "The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous" consisting of a Proposal to create a Conference and a form of temporary Charter purporting to be offered by the Trustees, the late Dr. R. S. and W. W. It seems clear that the Proposal of 1950 has received not only the approval of the Trustees but will receive, as indeed it will require, the active assistance and support of the Foundation. Presented thus with a *fait accompli* it would seem to be a vain and futile gesture even to comment upon the Proposal of 1950 soon to ripen into the actuality of 1951 were it not for the fact that in view of past events certain matters need to be set out for the record.

Let us recapitulate. [*fait accompli* = A thing done and made irreversible before those affected by it get knowledge of it]

"Organization" has been the *bête noire* of the Movement since it reached adolescence and since 1945 the question of reorganization at the top level has been the subject of discussion and communications among W. W. and ourselves and others. [*bête noir* = black beast, a terrible thing which one cannot stand or bear, an object of aversion]

On April 8, 1947 W.W.[Bill Wilson] issued a three-part document entitled "The Alcoholic Foundation of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow " Under Part Three, a Plan was suggested for a: "General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous."

This was the Plan of 1947.

The Plan of 1947 was not adopted.

Later, the Statement of 1948 was adopted. That is, the Trustees at their quarterly meeting in July, 1948 adopted a Statement of Principles Governing the Policies and Activities of the Board of Trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation.

The Statement of 1948, so adopted, was formulated and presented to the Foundation by a working group comprising the A.A. Trustees and other older members apprehensive over the attempt to convert the Movement into an Organization.

The Statement of 1948, together with the "Steps" which gave it validity and authority, constituted until now the organic Rule of the Movement.

The Proposal of 1950 is substantially the Plan of 1947.

The Plan of 1947 which was rejected and the Proposal of 1950 which was accepted are both antithetical in letter and in spirit to the Statement of 1948.

The Statement of 1948 was not distributed among the Groups nor was it published in "The Grapevine" except in emasculated form. The Proposal of 1950 is being reproduced, in part, in "The Grapevine" and free distribution of 50,000 copies is planned. The membership as a whole, therefore, will probably never be informed about this volte-face on the part of the Trustees. "The Grapevine" is no longer the Voice of the A.A. Movement; it is the "kept" organ of the new dispensation. Hence, it is necessary that these facts be summed up for the record.

The Proposal of 1950 is one to expand central organizational activities; the purpose of the Statement of 1948 was to contract them. Thus, the Statement said in part:

"Development of organizational structure is inimical to A.A. as a Movement. Organization, therefore, has been and should be kept to a minimum. As the Movement grows the need for organization diminishes. Most of the problems of relations are coming to be handled by local and regional groups and committees, functioning autonomously, which is as it should be."

"Again more concretely, the Trustees feel that they will best safeguard the established tradition of A.A. by seeing to the application of the Twelve Points of Tradition to A.A. activities at their central point, insofar as practicable, in the following respects:

\*limitation of volume and scope of activities at the general headquarters office; and the inauguration of a program of gradual decentralization of headquarters activities to the end that the responsibility of 'carrying the message' may be gradually assumed by local groups and committees."

Another radical break with principle and tradition is represented by the political character of the Proposal of 1950. A substantial portion of the pamphlet is devoted to a witches' brew of elections, assemblies, representatives, delegates, tellers, chairmen, secretaries, treasurers, committeemen "available" and committeemen not "available", election by trial, election by lot, reports, duties, panel No. 1, panel No. 2, one-year delegates, two-year delegates, extra delegates and so on, all of which means "politics" in anybody's vocabulary and understanding, vehement protestations to the contrary notwithstanding.

The tongue-in-cheek pretension of "keeping politics out of it" and the fatuous nonsense about delegates being servants and not senators could well have been omitted and a recommendation made that a body be established, frankly legislative in purpose, of whose policies the Trustees would be the mere executants. For, under the proposal of 1950, the Trustees are to "traditionally favor all resolutions [of the Conference] passed by a two-thirds vote" and "unquestionably look with favor on any advise [sic] offered by two-thirds of the Conference respecting the composition of the Foundation Board."

I call your attention to the following excerpt from the Statement of 1948:

"Finally, the Trustees feel that in order fully to carry on the duties with which they are charged the independence of the Foundation must be observed in respect of its constituency and its proceedings.

"It is the considered judgment of your Trustees that if the A.A. Movement remains unshackled by the fetters of organization and is kept free from the corroding effect of political procedures which stem from over-organization; it will grow in vast numbers and beneficent influence among those who are open to its message."

Henceforth, however, it appears that the appointment and tenure of the Trustees will be at the pleasure of politically selected delegates, amateur Warwicks; the "off center" position for which you have long struggled will be forever lost; and the Movement will be permitted to be shackled "by the fetters of organization" and no longer "kept free from the corroding effect of political procedures."

But above all, the Proposal of 1950 is patently a meretricious scheme to create a swift, swelling and continuous stream of revenue which shall flow into the New York treasury, there to be used for the

aggrandizement of a bureaucratic Headquarters. This is to be accomplished by the establishment and operation of a political machine efficiently organized from the grass roots up.

“One more word about money”, states the brochure, and then runs on for many, many words about money, concluding; “...hundreds of Groups not now giving to the Foundation will commence to do so.” Thus, the Grand Purpose of it all is starkly revealed in all its crudity and crassness. Money and politics which killeth the spirit become the deus ex machina of the new regime.

Those who would retain their personal freedom and adhere to historic principles -- and their name is legion -- will renounce the “legacy”. There should be no question and there need be no difficulty about the choice to be made. They will repudiate the Organization and reaffirm their original faith. They will continue their A.A. apostolate on an individual and cellular basis in a quiet, unassuming and humble way.

[apostolate= service to help others and carry the message, repudiate= reject as unauthorized]

It is not the purpose of this communication to assess blame or recommend repentance and reparation on the part of those responsible for perpetrating a catastrophe or attempting to thrust upon the members a Hobson’s choice. For it is not a Hobson's choice. There is an alternative. [Hobson's choice= take what is offered or nothing]

The purpose of this letter, as stated at the outset, is to keep the record straight. Copies thereof go out to your colleagues.

Very sincerely yours,

[signed]

ROYAL F.S.

[AA member and Trustee]

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**Other Minority Opinion sites:**

<http://aamo.info/>

<http://gsowatch.aamo.info/>

**Past issues of OPPF:**

<http://www.aamo.info/oppf/>

**AA Big Book Study Group:**

<http://aabbsg.de/>

**AA History:**

[http://aabbsg.de/chs/history\\_links.htm](http://aabbsg.de/chs/history_links.htm)

[http://silkworth.net/mitchellk/mitchellk\\_library.html](http://silkworth.net/mitchellk/mitchellk_library.html)

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--Thank You,

--Dennis M. -- OPPF Co-Editor

Come on folks don't be shy send in you views, comments, and letters.

Contact us at: [oppf@aamo.info](mailto:oppf@aamo.info)