

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
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June 15, 1998

Bob K~~~~~
c/o Los Angeles Central Office
4311 Wilshire Boulevard, #104
Los Angeles, CA 90010

Dear Bob:

Since I serve as assistant secretary of the General Service Board, Gary Glenn has asked me to respond to your letter of June 2, 1998. While he would prefer answering correspondence marked to his attention personally, his schedule simply does not permit that. However, your concerns are duly noted and appreciated.

With regard to your suggestion that the board distribute Gay G~~~~~'s Minority Report to all groups rather than to the delegates, it would set an impractical precedent. Furthermore, Gay addressed the Minority Report to each of the members of the General Service Board so it would have been inappropriate for us to send it to all the groups in the U.S. and Canada.

The fact is that Gay G~~~~~'s Minority Report has received a significant amount of attention from the General Service Board and the General Service Conference during the past two years.

The issue was debated at length, both in the Conference Finance Committee and on the floor of the Conference last year. With substantial unanimity, the Conference supported the present board policy by rejecting a proposed substitute policy that has essentially said discounts are acceptable, if offered to anyone, but subsidies or rebates are not. There were 132 voting members of the 1997 General Service Conference and there were only 28 votes for this proposed substitute policy. That would indicate that most of the Conference members felt that the arrangements for subsidizing bus transportation at the San Diego Convention were no more a violation of our Seventh Tradition than the common practice at the area level of accepting a free hotel room for renting a given number of rooms for an area convention. The 28 people who voted for the substitute policy apparently felt that because the subsidy arrangement involved the exchange of cash, this somehow made it different and made it a contribution to A.A. from an outside source.

Others hold the view that the city of San Diego wanted our business. They would have offered the same deal to any other organization planning an event of similar size. It was just one way to structure the package or discount costs, so that they would be in the winning bidders. Those with that perspective do not view these arrangements as a contribution or gift to A.A. so they see no conflict with the Seventh Tradition.

Web Site: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

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With regard to the board's taking action on this matter, the trustees' Finance committee discussed the letter and Minority Report from Gay G~~~~~ at their February 1, 1998 meeting. Although I was not present at the meeting, I reviewed the minutes of the meeting and also talked with our Controller who serves as secretary of that committee. In addition, I reviewed correspondence on the topic from Art Knight, the treasurer of the General Service Board and chairman of that committee. I learned that Gay's "Minority Report" was the subject of considerable discussion. The report was on the agenda of the trustees' Committee on the Conference and the trustees' International Conventions/Regional Forums Committee. Both the Conference and International Conventions/Regional Forums Committees referred the matter to the Finance Committee since it had been addressed by that committee in 1997.

The January board meeting is attended by the Conference Committee Chairs and six of them were present during the discussion at the Finance Committee, including the chairperson of the Conference Committee on Finance who participated in the entire discussion at last year's Conference.

The minutes of the meeting, which were accepted by the board on Monday morning state:

"Following significant sharing from the committee members and guests, the committee felt that the best interest of the Fellowship would not be served by forwarding this report and related documents to the Conference Committee at this time."

In the words of the committee chairman, the word "significant" doesn't adequately describe the fullness of the discussion. It is my understanding that everyone in the room had a chance to speak if they so desired, and many did. There were, quite frankly, just a few who felt this matter should again be sent to the Conference Finance Committee. However, in the course of the discussion it was made clear that the Conference Finance Committee was entirely free to take up the matter again if they so wish.

Those who participated in the meeting expressed a sense that the minority voice had been heard last year at the Conference. Further, it appeared that the sense of those present was that an informed group conscience had been reached at that time.

As you probably know, the 1998 General Service Conference took place April 19-25, 1998. The Conference Committee on Finance reviewed the action taken by the 1997 General Service Conference concerning the board policy that states:

Whenever a discount or subsidy is that which would be offered to any other organization of similar size requiring a purchase service or product of similar character and magnitude, i.e., convention rates at hotels, it may be accepted. Whenever a discount or subsidy is partly or in total offered because we are Alcoholics Anonymous, it must be declined.

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The 1997 General Service Conference voted not to change this policy. With substantial unanimity, the 1998 Conference Committee on Finance felt there was no need to reconsider this decision.

In closing, please let me assure you that your concerns are appreciated. I have yet to meet a member of Alcoholics Anonymous who did not want what he or she believes is best for our beloved Fellowship. Clearly, on this matter, there are different perspectives with regard to what constitutes a gift or contribution to A.A. At this time, it appears that the majority of Conference delegates and trustees do not view the cash incentives from San Diego or the one negotiated from Minneapolis 2000 as gifts or contributions to Alcoholics Anonymous. If they were considered as such, the incentives would not have been accepted in the first place.

I hope you will find this information helpful and informative. It is always a pleasure to hear from concerned members of the Fellowship. Please let us know if we can be of further service. In the meantime, your friends here join me in sending best wishes your way.

Sincerely yours,
/signed/
Lois Fisher
Assistant Secretary
General Service Board

LF/lis