

collective futures depend on the survival of Alcoholics Anonymous, we must do what we can to maintain the integrity of the program and of the organization itself. This is in great measure accomplished through acceptance of our spiritual responsibility of self-support, both through financial contributions and personal contributions of service to our fellow alcoholics. While money is essential in carrying our message, it is useless if A.A. members are not willing to give of themselves to put that money to effective use.

It is also important to note the effect that outside contributions could have on the integrity of our message and our singleness of purpose. As Tradition Seven further states, acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. We cannot afford to be in the debt of an outside entity that might then expect to be “repaid” in some way adverse to the welfare – or wishes – of A.A. as a whole. Just as the autonomy of each group is respected in Tradition Four, Tradition Seven protects the autonomy of Alcoholics Anonymous from outside interference. We cannot allow our message or our purpose to be diluted by negative influences from outside our organization. As Bill Wilson said, “We had best pay our own bills”.

Another essential element of this discussion is the idea of corporate

poverty – the built-in protection from the enemy within – the alcoholic ego. One sure way to welcome that enemy is to accumulate funds beyond a prudent reserve, at any level within the Fellowship. A 1970 Grapevine article related a classic example of the combination of these destructive influences from within and without:

“A church told a big group which met there that AA's money was not needed, so the group collections just piled up for several years. Free use of the space was, of course, really the acceptance of an outside contribution. Subsidized by the church, the group was not autonomous; the church treated it as if it were just another church activity, canceling its meetings during Christmas and other holidays, moving it from attic to basement, and so on. When the group treasury reached \$700, quarreling broke out, and the group died.” One might suggest that this is just one isolated group, but I have attended a group in Area 75 that was once very strong, with many members. A Treasury in excess of \$7,000 was accumulated and the group began using that money for purposes other than the support of Alcoholics Anonymous and its primary purpose; e.g. providing loans to its members. We have now heard that that group, although still alive, is poorly attended and struggling. If a group, district or area treasury has ballooned to an imprudent amount for no stated AA

purpose, we have a responsibility to question the appropriate members and/or trusted servants and strongly encourage maintenance of a prudent reserve. Just as the General Service Conference structure is designed to keep these important principles at work at the General Service Board, A.A. World Services and Grapevine Corporate Board levels, we must ensure they are at work in our groups, Central Offices, Intergroups, Districts and Areas. This is accomplished in the same way we carry the basic message of recovery – one alcoholic talking to another alcoholic. I believe we are obligated to carry the complete message contained in our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service – or we shortchange those who come to us for help. This means we teach the fullness of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts and the importance to our survival of all of these principles.

Concept One tells us that the AA groups today hold ultimate responsibility for our world services. There is no greater mandate than that for self-support. We – you and me – are responsible to safeguard that the unchanged message of recovery provided so generously to us will be shared with alcoholics worldwide, as well in our own communities. What an incredible responsibility we have to fulfill!

So what have you done in your home group over the last three months to encourage self-support? Have you had any discussions in your district meetings about the 7th Tradition? Did you discuss the array of services provided by your General Service Office and share that information in your groups? Did you participate in the birthday plan or educate your sponsees about it? It is a spiritual privilege and responsibility to support our fellowship worldwide. Let's act on it.

Personally I find that my level of giving is commensurate with my level of my gratitude. What am I willing to do to perpetuate the Fellowship that saved my life? With all service to Alcoholics Anonymous, the more I give, the more I receive. The more I receive, the more I owe. The more I owe, the more I feel obligated to give. You all understand how this works. This is our service legacy. A.A. cannot survive without our help.

Bill Wilson wrote: "And these principles we understand: that AA wants no charity; that we support our own services. We understand – but we sometimes forget." Let us not forget.

Reprinted here with permission of Nancy G., Panel 55/Area 75 Delegate (S. Wisconsin)

A Suggested Plan of Contribution...

- 50% Central or Intergroup Office
- 30% NE Ohio General Service
PO Box 91384
Cleveland, Ohio 44101-3384
- 10% General Service Office (GSO)
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
- 10% Local District - Contact your GSR, DCM, or Area 54 Registrar to determine your district if unsure, or visit <http://area54.org/districts.html>



THE SEVENTH TRADITION – WHY MUST WE BE SELF-SUPPORTING?

Tradition Seven states that our groups are to be fully self-supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members, declining outside contributions. Our presentation topic asks why this principle of self-support is a "must" for Alcoholics Anonymous. I believe it is simply because our survival, as individuals and as groups, and more broadly the survival of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, depends on the spiritual principles embodied in this Tradition.

We know that the early history of our Fellowship provides the foundation for this principle of self-support, as well as for our other Traditions. With countless struggles over money, property and prestige, hard lessons were learned through the trial and error of A.A.'s pioneering groups and leadership. Bill Wilson knew the importance of learning from the past and provided us the framework in which the Fellowship could continue to permanently operate through the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. No Tradition or Concept stands alone; each contributes to the whole. And it is through these combined principles we are called to a purpose outside of and greater than ourselves.

This truly is **our** Fellowship, and if we believe that our personal and