

Concept XII

General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

This Concept consists of the General Warranties of the General Service Conference. It is cast in stone; that is, although Bill leaves the door open for alterations and changes in the other Concepts and points out that the rest of the Conference Charter “can be readily amended,” these General Warranties — like the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions — be changed only by “written consent of three-quarters of all A.A. groups” in the world!

Why?

Because “these Warranties indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality which the Conference should always possess. . . . These are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves.”

The Warranties also express spiritual principles which apply to all other A.A. entities as well. Let us, then, consider these principles one by one:

Warranty One: “The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power.” The Seventh Tradition protects us against the accumulation of too much money. So long as we refuse to take outside contributions and limit individual member’s donations, “we shall not become wealthy in any perilous sense.” And if we live by

Tradition Two — that “our ultimate authority is a loving God” and that “our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern” — then we are safe from perilous power.

Warranty Two: “Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle.” Although many of us as active alcoholics were free spenders, when it comes to supporting “A.A. service overhead, we are apt to turn a bit reluctant.” Yet, in A.A. the cost of the service office is relatively low in terms of the number of groups served, and if the need for support is made clear, the contributions are forthcoming. The Reserve Fund should be one full year’s operating expenses of the G.S.O. and the *Grapevine*. The Reserve Fund comes almost entirely from income from the sale of A.A. literature, which also is used to make up the deficit between group contributions and the cost of group services.

Warranty Three: “None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.” This principle is discussed earlier in Concept IV, but “it is so important, we have made it the subject of this Warranty” — a