

On Trust — The Spirit of the General Service Conference

“So, since 1951 we have been holding these yearly Conferences, to see whether this movement was interested enough, was responsible enough, felt those services were worthwhile enough, to maintain so long as God will need this society. And I think it’s the conclusion of every delegate who has been there that yes, we should take these things over. So, in 1955 we propose to hold an International Convention, at which time, on behalf of the oldtimers, and of Smithy and me, we shall say to you, here is the remainder of your Third Legacy. This Conference shall become our successor. To you we hand the last torch. Carry on. Face your destiny with surety and courage, and God love you.”

— *Bill W., speaking at the 1954 Texas State Convention*

At the 1955 International Convention the General Service Conference was designated as the actual voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society. This was done over the objections of those who worried that such a gathering would result in politics, confusion, expense and fruitless strife. Our founders had faith that future generations of A.A. members could effectively take responsibility for maintaining our vital world services.

Every delegate, trustee, director and staff member who serves as a voting member of the General Service Conference is a direct, personal beneficiary of that faith.

Each of us justifies that faith by participation at the Conference in a spirit of fellowship and trust. We are respectful of the committee system which brings matters to the Conference for consideration. We trust that a democratic process engaged in by people acting in good faith will be in the best interest of our fellowship, even though we may not agree with all of the decisions made. We trust that future Conferences will carry on A.A.’s wonderful legacy of service, just as those who came before us have placed that same trust in us.

“Therefore we expect that our Conferences will always try to act in the spirit of mutual respect and love — one member for another. In turn, this sign signifies that mutual trust should prevail; that no action ought to be taken in anger, haste, or recklessness; that care will be observed to respect and protect all minorities; that no action should ever be personally punitive; that whenever possible, important actions will be taken in substantial unanimity; and that our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great or small, whether these be found in the majority or in the minority. The sum of these several attitudes and practices is, in our view, the very essence of democracy — in action and spirit.”

— *The A.A. Service Manual, page 75 (Bill W.’s Commentary on Concept XII)*