

Five Straw Polls and a Motion: A **FIPT** Temperature Check from **WSC 2016**

Distribution of illicit literature is not a new phenomenon in some corners of the Fellowship. An unapproved version of the first ten chapters of the Basic Text (BT) first appeared in the late 1980s. Then as now, these photocopied booklets usually contained material from the Third Edition, Revised, with the insertion of four and a half sentences from the Second Edition Basic Text.

Group conscience determined that this language—struck through in the text box to the right—incorrectly places the NA service structure outside of Narcotics Anonymous. In 1984, the Fellowship voted to remove this erroneous depiction from the Second Edition of the Basic Text. Subsequent decisions affirmed that conclusion. In 1988, the WSC rejected the idea of changing the text beyond fixing errors for the Fourth Edition BT. In 1991, the Conference voted against considering which edition of the book should be published. This was a year of extensive Fellowship discussions about this issue due to a lawsuit. Delegates issued several statements that they created and adopted at the WSC in response to this controversy. In 1993, the Conference approved the *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust (FIPT)* which affirmed that the World Service Office has the sole authority to publish and distribute NA literature on behalf of the Fellowship as a whole. And most recently, the 2004 motion that authorized the Sixth Edition BT specified that no changes should be made to chapters one through ten, leading to production of our unanimously approved current Sixth Edition in 2008.

Basic Text, Tradition Four, second paragraph

One might ask, "Are we truly autonomous? What about our service committees, our offices, activities, and all the other things that go on in N.A.?" ~~The answer is that these things are not N.A. They are services we utilize to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women; addicts meeting in groups and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. All else in not N.A. Those things we mention are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road might be easier. Whether we choose to utilize these services is up to the group.~~

Tradition Nine, second paragraph

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the things that we can do to help N.A. It says that we may create service boards or committees to serve the needs of the Fellowship. ~~None of them has the power to rule, censor, decide, or dictate. They exist solely to serve the Fellowship, but they are not a part of Narcotics Anonymous. This is the nature of our service structure as it has been defined in the N.A. service manual.~~

Group conscience has made the contents and publisher of our BT clear. And yet, there are those who believe their personal opinions override the Fellowship's conscience. Over the last few years, NAWS has appealed directly to the Fellowship, asking that members stand with group conscience and refuse to tolerate behavior that's contrary to it. As reported last year, the WB developed two bulletins on *FIPT* issues and made them available at www.na.org/FIPT.

At WSC 2016, NAWS Executive Director Anthony Edmonson polled the Conference seeking additional direction in a session dedicated to *FIPT* issues. The first of three questions asked, "Do we believe that the Fellowship still affirms the rules we have agreed on in the *FIPT*?"⁴ This question goes to the heart of the controversy about language and publication rights. Ninety-five percent (95%) of Conference participants responded "yes," affirming previous decisions.

A second question solicited Conference input on how to handle registration requests from groups that state their intention to use unapproved materials. It seems that a developmental draft of the Basic Text known as the "gray form" is being used in some quarters. The draft evolved significantly before the final approval version of the Basic Text was offered for Conference approval in 1982. While the gray form may be of interest to members as an artifact of NA history, it has never been approved by the Fellowship. *The Group Booklet* specifies that "only NA-approved literature is appropriate for reading in Narcotics Anonymous meetings." Recently, a few groups stated an intention to do otherwise as they registered with NAWS. This raised questions for NAWS, and the groups' registrations were put on hold until we could get some direction from the Conference. Given this context, Conference participants were asked, "Should we register and list on the meeting locator, NA

groups that clearly intend to use material that is not NA-Fellowship approved?" Seventy-four percent (74%) of Conference participants responded "no."

A third question addressed area and regional service committees that post NA recovery literature to their websites. In most cases, local service bodies have not posted literature in defiance; rather, such postings usually reflect a lack of understanding about copyright issues. When contacted, most service bodies agree to remove book-length pieces and to simply link to na.org for downloadable IPs and booklets. We sought guidance from the Conference regarding how to handle service bodies that refuse to cooperate. Conference participants were asked, "Should we take action to remove NA recovery literature from ASC/RSC sites, even if it means shutting down the site?" Seventy-one percent (71%) advised that we should take such actions. While we continue to contact and make requests to these sites, we have taken no action to date to would lead to a site being shut down.

To gain further clarity about how the Conference viewed the use of illicit literature, we asked two further questions in the Moving Forward with Common Vision session. Seventy-one (71) Conference participants replied "yes," 39 "no," 3 abstained, and 4 were



⁴ WSC 1991 Statement: "The Basic Text, Fifth Edition, is the only edition of the Basic Text that is currently approved by the World Service Conference of Narcotics Anonymous for publication and sale. The World Service Office Board of Directors is entrusted with the responsibility for protecting the fellowship's physical and intellectual properties, including the Basic Text, and at the board of directors' discretion, shall take legal action to protect those rights against any and all persons who choose to infringe upon this literature trust." This statement was updated at WSC 2008, making the Sixth Edition of the Basic Text the only edition approved for NAWS production.

tallied as present, not voting on the first question: “Do we want to say that NA groups use *current editions* of NA Fellowship-approved literature?” A second question, “Are former editions of NA Fellowship-approved literature different in your mind than the hybrid versions that have been created and never approved in that form?” received the following responses: 93 replied “yes,” 12 “no,” 7 abstained, and 6 were counted as present, not voting.

A final discussion and decision related to *FIPT* issues involved old business motion #8, proposed by the Oklahoma Region. The motion, “To direct NAWS to produce a low-cost paperback English version of the Basic Text which contains only the first ten chapters called ‘Our Program’” was intended, in the words of its maker, “To provide a cost-effective means to carry our message and fulfill our primary purpose.” Motion 8 failed by a large margin, with 14 voting for the motion, 95 against, one abstention, and one present, not voting. This is significant to the discussion of *FIPT* issues since distribution of illicit texts often purports to be motivated by this same intent. This decision by the WSC is consistent with the outcome of similar motions over the years to offer a low-cost Basic Text, all of which have been rejected.

The temperature check offered by the five straw polls and a motion at WSC 2016 affirmed previous decisions

about how NAWS protects the Fellowship’s intellectual property. We thank all of the members who provided their delegate teams with feedback on motion 8 and otherwise made their understanding of *FIPT*-related issues known. Your efforts seem to have had an effect, and not just at the WSC. In the latter half of the fiscal year through the date of this NAWS *Annual Report* publication, we’ve noticed a distinct downturn in *FIPT*-related inquiries. Fewer NA websites have improperly posted NA literature, and no additional “gray form” meetings have attempted to register with NAWS since the Conference. This is good news for NAWS and the Fellowship as a whole because it means more of our human resources can be directed to supporting worldwide efforts to share our message.

For more on *FIPT* issues:

- Visit www.na.org/FIPT where you’ll find two essays:
 - “NA Copyrights and Literature”
 - “Group Conscience and NA Literature”
- And read “NA Literature and Our Primary Purpose” in the 2016 *Conference Agenda Report*, available here: www.na.org/?ID=wsc2016.

