

GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
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(Between 119th and 120th streets)



July 20, 1998

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

Dear Bob:

Your request for the copies of Bill W.'s letters dated November 11, and December 31, 1957 has been forwarded to us. Unfortunately, by the decision of the trustee's Archives Committee, we are not able to send you photocopies of private correspondence. The trustees' were concerned about the confidentiality of our members' private correspondence, the anonymity of our members, and the physical integrity of the collection when they decided not to reproduce original correspondence. However, we are happy provide excerpts from those documents.

Both letters were addressed to Stan W. On November 11, 1957 Bill W. wrote:
"...In the two prior Conventions, there was a special object in each. At Cleveland, we wished to validate the A.A. Traditions and give Dr. Bob his last look at us. At St. Louis, it was a question of delivering the Legacies Of Alcoholics Anonymous and the management of A.A. affairs into the hands of A.A. itself. In both instances, A.A. Headquarters sponsored these activities, managed them, and underwrote them. This is quite as it should have been.

But when it comes to the 1960 affair, I think we have to wait for the sentiment of the movement as to whether it shall be held at all, and then in what state and in what city.

...I doubt very much if the General Service Board could think of underwriting a 1960 Convention. You must remember that there is not particular object in view except the establishment of the custom of a five-year international gathering. Certainly no one objects to this. But the state of our finances down here is so uncertain that we could not possibly take the initiative in the matter, nor underwrite it if it was decided that it should be held in California or anywhere else. However, if the Conference does decided that it want such a Convention, then the General Service Board would feel a certain amount of responsibility for its conduct, even though its finances would not permit any underwriting. I think the General Service Board would want to have control of the public relations, because this is a matter of general concern. It might also wish to have something to say about the meetings and the general setup. But I'm sure the GSB won't put itself in the position of advocating a Convention much less deciding on the state or city and in not case could it possibly underwrite the situation under present conditions as we are probably faced with a large deficit which will take a gash out of the Reserve Fund this year. On the Cleveland Convention

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\$3,00 [sic] was lost and \$12,000 more was dropped in the St. Louis Convention. These were good investments, certainly. But we do not think that we are in the financial position to stand anymore of this kind of loss just now. Therefore, we are left, down here, in the awkward position of refusing underwriting, and demanding that the area having the Convention do this job – at the same time wishing a certain amount of control over the proceedings. Of course this is understandable, but awkward, nevertheless."

On December 31, 1957 Bill W. wrote:

"Thought I haven't seen your recent letter to the office, I'm told that you are a bit disturbed about the trustee's conclusions not to financially underwrite a convention should it take place in California.

I make haste to say that this isn't a conclusion necessarily binding. It was only a tentative opinion, based on the facts of our financial life as we see things here. It seems to me that this question should be presented to the Conference and if they wish to spend money and assume the full responsibility, of course that will be fine with us. In fact, everything I wrote you was intended to be of a tentative nature to give you some sort of advance notice, prior to the Conference, what the possibilities and probabilities might be.

...Respecting the under writing of the convention out there, perhaps we are over-cautious.

Personally, I think this one will easily subsidize itself because you have such vast numbers of people within rather easy traveling distance, a state of affairs that we did not have in St Louis at all. However, this convention is straight international gather with no special purpose in mind. At Cleveland, we wanted Dr. Bob to have a last look and confirm the Traditions. At St. Louis, we wanted to put the movement on its own. The losses in these cases were quite justified, on such grounds. But whether to set the precedent for underwriting a series of such conventions, any of which might incur losses, perhaps heavy ones, is something of another question.

If too, we had plenty of money down here, it is probably that no one would hesitate underwriting a whole series of conventions. But we had to ask ourselves whether maintaining the security of Headquarters or underwriting such gatherings is the most important. The country is still in a time of relative prosperity. And yet we may run a deficit of \$30,00 [sic] in group contributions for this year. Though the bill is mighty small, per capita, and per groups and it isn't paid yet. What, therefore, might happen if we had really hard times in this country. This would be the period in which we would want to maintain A.A.'s services in full strength – it would be more needed than ever. If, under these circumstances, group contributions declined by one-third, we would have to slash essential services accordingly or else gobble up that reserve fund pretty fast.

You certainly have a point on the indirect financial benefits of such a convention. The publicity and the gatherings themselves can result in more membership and more literature sales. But how much more? I think we lost \$15,000 in St. Louis. The publicity might have brought in a thousand or more members. These members might buy books and put in their dollar or two a year. The public would buy a little more literature. But it would take an awful lot of contributing members and book sales – far more than anyone could imagine – to anywhere near make \$15,00 [sic]. Taken altogether, the publicity resulting from St. Louis was nothing very spectacular. This, even though

it was a very special occasion.

So, although the California project would doubtless pay off, we are nevertheless reluctant to set a precedent for conventions to come while we are in the present financial conditions. But, as I have said, this is really a question for the Conference. The trustees "first duty is the maintenance of headquarters. But if the Conference wishes to take the responsibility, I am sure all of us here would most cheerfully go along."

Bob, I hope you'll find these excerpts helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. Warm regards from the G.S.O. Archives.

Sincerely,

/signed/
Judith Santon
Archivist