**Saturday morning: Another instance of “specific” vs. “special”; the Big One; statement on approved literature; another “specific”**

Delegate report: We’re down to 172. First business was to alter a 1994 policy about specific focus meetings. It says that such meetings are recognized and members should be respect them, while affirming that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively, and all OA members are welcome at all OA meetings. So, like, you’re always welcome, but choose another meeting if you possibly can. It passed.

Quite possibly the most controversial item facing the conference this year is whether to remove all AA literature from the list of Conference-approved literature except the Big Book and the AA Twelve and Twelve. The original proposal would have excluded the Twelve and Twelve, too. AA has asked us to use our own literature. Those opposed saw this as a removal of OA’s history, as if no one would remember that we once used AA literature if we decided not to use them in the future. I decided to abstain, because of the substitute motion’s inclusion of the Twelve and Twelve. I think at 63 years old, we are more than old enough to stand on our own. The proposal failed, 68-90.

The next proposal was quite murky to me, so much so that I had to ask the person next to me what it means. Fortunately for me, she’s on the reference subcommittee and has focused on this. Apparently, A Vision For You, a specific path for working program within OA that some might describe as more focused or more rigorous than other paths, uses only the Big Book as a text, and furthermore, has been known to severely denigrate OA literature (despite being OA members). But the proposal before us says \*nothing\* of that. It adds to the existing statement that, though groups are free to focus on only one piece of approved literature, they are encouraged to use any and all approved literature. The last delegate allowed at the mic during the question period asked the chair how this would address the problem, and she said, “gently.” “Poorly, if you ask me,” as she left the mic. To me, the proposal is nothing more than paste. I can’t imagine anyone acting differently as the result of this addition, especially someone who already has negative regard for OA’s words. Ordinarily, I would not go along with empty words; my professional life has been devoted to clear, sparse language. Somehow, this time, I voted in favor, because it can’t hurt to say it and might incrementally address the condition. Though I don’t think so. It passed, 103-54.

Updated delegate count: 171, so someone else left. All the items from here are proposed bylaw amendments.

Next item would change Article VI of our bylaws, about service bodies, to change the term “special” to “specific” next to “focus service boards.” (Actually, that was an amendment; the original sought simply to remove the word.) It passed unanimously.

Proposal 13 would adds words to a different section of Article VI. It says if an intergroup affiliates with a national service board, it can affiliate with the national service board’s region or choose to remain in its current region. I gather that this regards the Virtual Region, but again, I don’t get it. Each proposal has a statement of intent, and this one’s is: “To provide clarification and flexibility for intergroups who wish to affiliate with the NSB’s region.” Still don’t get it. What I can say is that the next proposed amendment refers, in its statement of intention, to “the evolving new reality,” which alludes to the existence of the Virtual Region, which not only exists but continues to grow.

As you know, all regions previously were designated by geography. The ether of the Virtual “Region” overlays all the physical regions, and it makes things confusing, for me. Last night I met Rachel, who settled last week near Durango, Colorado, after traveling and living out of their car for a year and a half. In the old days, she would have been in Region 3. But she attends most of her meetings online, and she identifies with the Virtual Region. The thing is, I regularly go to meetings “in” Ottawa and Abilene currently, and since the pandemic, have previously attended meetings “in” New York and San Francisco. And I identify with Region 6. Except for living on the road, the difference is negligible.

New delegate report: 170

I’ve marveled previously that the pandemic has almost entirely removed geography as an organizing principle. It used to be I could choose from among maybe 30 meetings a week, depending on how far I was willing to travel. Now, I can choose from among thousands. Ain’t it great? For me, a value of the Virtual Region is that, freed from geography, members can organize by other factors, such a Young People, or BIPOC, or whatever. Do the members of Region 6 (as an example) have issues common to each other that are different from members in Region 7 or Region 8? As another example, Region 8 encompasses South Carolina and Brazil. Do they have issues in common? The regional tie is valuable when we want to gather for conventions or assemblies — I’ll drive to Albany for assembly, I’ll go to White Plains for the convention this fall, but would I go to, say, Peoria for either? Both have value, it seems. But I still think that we should have one condition for Rachel and I, since we’re interfacing with program essentially the same way.

While I’ve been writing, the conference decided to suspend discussion of No. 13 to discuss No. 14, which would do the exact opposite. … And now, we’re voting to learn which one, 13 or 14, is more favored, so we can then go to the winner for the two-thirds vote necessary for bylaw amendments to succeed. … And now, we’ve voted to extend the session until noon. Even with that, we’ve gained only 15 minutes, because of all the closing announcements and green dot ceremony. … Someone asked if an LA Intergroup could affiliate with Region 6. No, is the answer from the chair. … 80 voted to vote on Proposal 13, which would grant greater freedom to choose. 56 voted for Proposal 14. We’ll vote on the former. … Without even needing a count, Proposal 13 is accepted.

I voted for the greater freedom, but IMO, we haven’t worked through this issue yet, and it will come back before conference at least once more before it’s worked out.

Beth B. gave as much data from the demographic survey as she could in 3 minutes. I expected that these numbers would be entered into the record, but the chair said the numbers would be kept internally. But they just read them out loud…

In the green dot ceremony, an annual thing in which all the first-year participants come to the front of the room, are recognized, and then remove the green dots from their name tags. Seemingly more than half of the delegates went to the front of the room, and they were greeted with hooting and standing ovation. There must be something wrong with me, because I don’t get the fanfare. They came here to do work, just like everyone else, and they did. Thanks to them, but I’ll stay seated. … I did stand and cheer when the chair was recognized for her work, which I did think was extraordinary. Everything is on her, from before the start until after the end of five sessions over three days.