
ESSAY

January 1988

Post Office Box 300
Simi Valley, California 93062

FELLOWSHIP-WIDE VOTING PROCEDURE

Enclosed with this ESSAY is a document which is a first for SA—a proposed method for determining a fellowship-wide group conscience. This tells how every SA group will be involved in voting on matters affecting SA as a whole. This proposal must be ratified by the fellowship—that includes *your group*—before it can take effect. You must now take part in this process if you want any say in whether or not this enclosed proposal should be made binding on all of SA.

In the past, when the number of groups was relatively small, such matters were handled through the Central Office via mail or conference calls. The proposed procedure establishes a method by which an elected committee with staggered two-year terms represents the whole fellowship and acts on matters affecting SA as a whole. Note that if you are a member without a group, the only way you can vote is to get in contact with and vote with an existing group.

GROUP FEEDBACK DEADLINE. *Every SA group:* Please study the enclosed proposal from the Committee to Determine SA Procedure for Taking an International Group Conscience. Make sure all interested members receive copies of the proposal. Send in your initial group response to this proposal by March 31st of this year. This is your group feedback per item 6 on page one of the proposal. In other words, as of now, your group and every other SA group has the ball: Respond per item 6 by 3/31/88. This should allow time for the final vote (item 8) to be in by the Rochester Convention. Let's get the wheels rolling on this crucial issue: Discuss, pray, reflect, feed back. Remember: *Group*, not individual feedback, and summarize on enclosed sheet where possible. Mail or call in your group's item 6 response to:

IGC Committee
c/o SA Central Office
P O B 300, Simi Valley, CA 93062

CALENDAR

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by Essay or the Central Office.

March 18, 19, 20 1988. Portland, OR. Pacific Northwest Area Spring Conference-Retreat. Franciscan Renewal Center. Theme: HOW — Honest, Open, and Willing. See enclosed flyer and registration form.

March 31, 1988. Deadline for all SA groups to respond to the International Group Conscience Procedure proposal. Details below.

April 1988 -- New York City. Third annual one-day convention sponsored by Tri-State Intergroup (NY, CT, NJ). Rutgers Church, 73rd and Broadway. Call for details: Harvey N. 212/666-8956 or Jeff R. 212/580-0050.

April 15-17 --SA/S-Anon of Tucson, AZ Couples Retreat. Contact Burt or Jennifer S. 602/790-7759.

July 8, 9, 10 -- Rochester, NY. Semi-Annual International SA Convention. Holiday Inn, Genesee Plaza. Convention (discount) airlines: American Airlines. See enclosed flyer and reg. form.

January 1989 -- Salt Lake City, UT. Semi-Annual International SA Convention. Watch for future announcements.

NGC COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REQUESTS GROUP ACTION

"Dear SA Members: Please take time to carefully review the procedure for taking a group conscience for SA. Pray over it, discuss with your groups, and send your group reflections back to the Central Office. We'd like to get all reflections by the end of March if possible. I know it is often difficult to do the "business" of SA, but the more responses we get and the better the quality of the responses, the more representative a sample we'll be able to send back to the groups for final reflection and group conscience taking. As SA grows, it's important to discern how to best determine our international conscience on the important matters we are and will be facing. Thanks, Mike C., IGC Committee Chair."

[Ed: As a reminder and convenience, use the enclosed sheet for your group (item 6) response to the NGC proposal.]

CONVENTION IMPRESSIONS

J.B., Monterey Park, CA. "I benefitted immensely. I got enough courage to share what I had never been able to share in my home meeting."

J.P., Nashville, TN. "This was my sixth conference....I had the opportunity to spend time with some of my dearest friends, and that just keeps getting better and better; that's the main reason I'm a confirmed conference junkie. I got to make some new friends, too, and to deepen my relationship with people that I've only recently come to know. And at long last, I've met Nan [Central Office manager]!....The people with whom I share this walk are the very lifeblood of my recovery program.

"The big speaker meetings were generally good, although the general tone of our instructions about where to go, and what would be when, and so on, was a little too controlling for my taste. But the discussion meetings I attended were all excellent and very powerful. I especially appreciated a meeting on keeping women in SA, which seemed to open up a much-needed dialogue between women and men in the fellowship.

"And then there was the Sunday meeting. What bothered me was the fact that we had given star billing to what was essentially a professional approach. I got the strong impression that we traded in the sharing of our own experience, strength, and hope for the privilege of listening to someone tell us about ourselves from the outside. At every other conference that I've attended, we have finished with a meeting on spirituality in which anyone who wanted could get up and share. There was nothing like that this time; in fact, this is the first time that a conference had no place in which anyone could share with everyone there. That was what we lost Sunday. Talk about giving our power away to others!..."

K.D., Bellingham, WA. "The entire conference enabled me to be lifted up onto a new plane of understanding, trust, and love, not only with you folks, the world, but perhaps most important, my family. . . . a most wonderfully and professionally organized convention. You people have given me back my life, and I am only beginning to understand how much I owe you all."

L.M., NY, NY. "I feel I must write to you now while so many of the events of this weekend are still fresh in my mind. These past few days have been an inspiration for what the potential of recovery can be in my life. I saw and heard many who have been living in the solution for much longer than I have. I hope I can take some of [them] with me. I stated that my reason for coming was that I had lost sight of working the program. This weekend made that very clear to me. There is no progress when I'm just standing still. I can either move forward or backwards. Thank you all for giving me direction forward again. Thank you for just what I need."

C.S., Seattle, WA. "The conference was wonderful and I'm really glad I went. I look forward to future get-togethers like that...."

POSSIBLE GROUP ITINERARY BY ROY

Some groups have expressed the desire to meet with Roy K. if and when that becomes possible; in the following message, he asks for group response.

"Now that I am no longer gainfully employed and the Central Office is in its own quarters, I have the feeling I'd like to test God's will in the matter of visiting groups in an itinerary such as I took back in 1981. Then, in the aftermath of the Dear Abby article, another member and I went about the country helping groups get started and meeting with new members. (We had a marvelous time—a miracle a day, and sometimes more!) With some forty or fifty times the number of groups we had then, this would be quite a challenge today. Perhaps limiting it to those groups desiring such a visit would make it a more practical opportunity.

"I thought I'd start by *'asking for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out'* and asking you to join with me in this prayer for God's will and direction in this matter. Also, this would mean some form of transportation would have to become available to me, such as a motor home.

"Any suggestions? Groups interested in such a visit please let me know by writing Box 1920, Simi Valley, CA 93062 or calling the Central Office." Roy K.

GROUP NEWS

Lexington, KY. "Our Lexington SA group has recently gone to a second meeting per week All the fellows in our group sincerely want sobriety and are earnestly striving for it. . . ." S.B.

Warner Robbins, GA. "We've finally secured a meeting place in the education wing of the county hospital there and have held our first meeting. We named ourselves the Warner Robbins 12 By 12 Group of SA. . . ." A.B.

Castanea, PA. "Here is our group's first gift to our wonderful organization. It may be small but a lot of love and affection come with it for all of you generous workers. We still stand small in number (five) but big in faith. We have two members with over a year and the other three on their way to a year.

"I have been without a job now for over six months because of a lock-out of our union. This has been very tough on my wife and two children. I have been trying to keep busy doing odd jobs, but there has been a lot of time to think about addictions also. If it wasn't for you people and the SA, AA groups, I certainly would be in a much worse condition mentally and spiritually. Thanks to you and the Twelve Steps programs I am SOBER; the best Christmas gift any addict could ever ask for. As tears fill my eyes right now feeling the gratefulness of you people, I want to wish you all a very, very merry Christmas and a sober New Year." W.P

San Miguel de Tucuman, Argentina, So. America. "...We have established the first group of Sexaholics Anonymous in the Republic of Argentina that will be called 'Sobriety Group'.... J.A.C.

Arcata, CA. "...Dave, from Petrolia, called and came up and we visited a couple hours. Petrolia is two hours away from here via windy coastal mountain roads. He came again to our meeting last Monday....So last Monday evening, the fourth meeting of the North Coast SA had four members present. Wow! Pass the word, we need prayers and support. Three out of four—newcomers and a new group...." T.R.W.

Chicago, IL. "We have just started a new SA meeting here in Chicago. The Program has grown considerably, and we are now up to six meetings of SA throughout greater Chicago per week...." J.B.

Palm Desert, CA. "...There is no Coachella Valley-Palm Springs group yet, but when there is, we'll sure have some literature to begin with! It seems impossible that—one day at a time—it was almost seven months ago that I phoned SA and drove those very long 125 miles to my first meeting. Thanks, God, for sobriety and SA!" C.S.

Schenectady, NY. "....Right now we have four members...." R.F.

Buffalo, NY. "Enclosed is our contribution as collected by the Buffalo group. We're struggling with attendance problems; please say a prayer...." J.F.

Riverside, CA. "Here's our donations....We are growing each day in Riverside. Last night we had a business meeting and elected chairpersons (coffee, treasury, literature), only there was no election—each volunteered! The best business meetings are often the shortest!!" G.G.

Portland, OR. "....Also enclosed is a...contribution for the Central Office. We've been passing a second 'hat' for the CO since spring....At present we're drawing 15-20 per meeting...." S.F.

Wichita, KS. "Our group in Wichita is really growing. We have three meetings a week now! With 10-20 at each meeting! We're not very sober yet, but our group seems strong. I hear no rationalizing that one form of acting out is okay...Everyone's goal seems to be SA sobriety. Meetings are a safe, supportive place to be. We have newcomers nearly every week. And more of them are coming back!....we have so many children that we decided to hire the church baby sitter once a week. I think my kids feel much less left out of my life when they can meet my friends and their families...." B.C

Baltimore-Washington. The Baltimore-Washington Marathon was a success! A good time was had by all in the lovely accommodations of Christ Lutheran Church in Baltimore. Lots of good, longtime sobriety. One of our members. . .celebrated three years....Enclosed find a donation from the Marathon...." T.H.

Erie, PA. "....Our group is doing very well, and we see potential growth...I am forever grateful to the Cleveland group who gave so much to me in order to begin a group in the Erie area. I am ever amazed at the spirit of SA—the spirit of acceptance, the spirit of reach-out, and spirit of honesty; it brings about the healing which we never thought could be possible in our lives...." R.R.

Seattle, WA. "SA is doing real well up here. Our Friday night meeting is still pretty strong, 20-25 people, and we have three others on different days of the week. . . . Looking forward to the LA Convention. A small percentage of women. And there's lots of internal change and experimentation going on." C.S.

Ottawa, Ontario. "SA in Ottawa is now fully started. We have ten members attending regularly; at least half have substantial sobriety. SA works, and we are all grateful to God and to SA. Thank you all for the important part you play in this work....May God bless you and keep you all." N.G.

Galveston, TX. "....We are meeting regularly...Sobriety is growing in time with the fellowship. Best wishes to all..." C.D.

Kalispell, MT. "....We are planning a Saturday meeting as well as the Thursday evening meeting...." W.V.

Salem, OR. "....We have just begun a Friday night SA group here in Salem...." D.K.

Fairfield, CT. "I'm just back from our Tuesday night 'Sobriety Is Possible' meeting. (We have three meetings in CT...) This evening we had eight people, two with over a year of sobriety, several with a couple of months, and some newcomers. An intense, serious, and hopeful meeting. We had a treasurer's report and voted to send the main office...Grateful to you all for planting the seed. We feel we are part of the movement." W.E.

Olympia, WA. "...Fourteen attended last Monday, with an average about ten most of the time." W.M.

Cambridge, MA. "We are hoping one of us can come in December. Our thoughts, hopes, and prayers are with you! We have added a second meeting night, once a month...and hope to continue to grow—slow but sure!" N.S.

Benson, AZ. "....We are an SA group desiring sexual sobriety....We plan to send literature to the local psychiatric treatment center explaining the SA program and offering to meet with interested persons. The name of our group is 'Quest for Sanity.'" G.N.

Fair Oaks, PA. "This donation is from the entire group. Our group is well and growing in the Lord's hands. We presently have two with one year sobriety. Thank you for your help and support. All our prayers." P.R.

Baltimore, MD. "We now have two meetings in Baltimore...." J.A.

Washington, D.C. "In the Washington, DC groups, we have a growing total amount of sobriety, which feels substantial. We feel much less threatened by new people who may have 'dubious' motives for showing up. In the face of our bulk of sobriety, any other motive than 'a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober' seems to fade away. We'd like to get more involved in Twelfth Step work now, because at times we tend toward the scrupulous and introspective. We get self-centered, looking at the details of our defects both as groups and individuals, rather than just tossing them out in view and moving on.

"We have a central telephone answering service....People call and receive a message....now after about eighteen months, we can count three-four members who contacted us this way over a year ago. It takes time for the idea to soak in. Some members heard of SA two-three years before they came to a meeting. We are now looking for other Twelfth-Step ideas. On December 15, we'll have been in existence as a group for three years." R.M.

McAllen, TX. "I have found a small group of folks willing to meet now, twice a week, since moving to McAllen. What a gift from H.P.! All of us are still struggling with sobriety—white-knuckling all the way. But learning to surrender more and more. Thanks for your help." P.L.

Fort Worth, TX. "SA in Fort Worth is alive and well. We have two members now who have over a year of sobriety and several members with over 6 months. We currently have an active group in Ft. Worth and in Arlington. We are also praying about a place to meet in Dallas...." T.K.

Houston, TX. "The Houston meeting is growing slowly with seven members at the last meeting. (Call Jerry at 529-1912 for info.)" J.B.

Des Plains, IL. "Here is another loving installment of gratitude for the freedom God has granted us through His power and this fellowship." W.B.

Pine Bluff, Arkansas. "Thank you for your prayers and interest in us. Our one and only goal is sexual sobriety through the grace and love of God." J.N. [In response to having received free SA manuals, members of the SA group in the Arkansas Department of Corrections sent in personal donations, as they were able, each of which was listed on the check issued on the inmate account. What a fine example of our Seventh Tradition self-support. Thank you G.L., G.B., R.S., and R.B.]

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NEW GROUPS

The following groups have advised Central Office since the last newsletter that they are now "in business." [If your group has not been listed with CO and you want us to know of your existence, write SA, P O Box 300, Simi Valley, CA 93062 and give particulars, including contact persons.]

Albany/Schenectady, NY

Alhambra, CA (women's group)

Lawrenceburg, TN

Newark, NJ

Salem, OR

Gaithersburg, MD

Muscle Shoals, AL (ESSAY mistakenly thought this was in Spruce Pine)

Lansing, MI

Omaha, NE

Warner Robins, GA

Brimfield, IL

McAllen, TX

Jackson, MS

Falls Church, VA

MEMBER NEWS

H.M., Recklinghausen, W.Ger. I'd like to let you know that our son Simon Alexander was born in the morning of October 28th. We...thank God for his everlasting help. My thanks also to SA, which I found in August 1985 and where I learned so much about myself...and about the love and grace of God, who is with me (and was) all the time in good and bad days. SA has preserved our marriage since I was able to change my thinking, and also to stay sober now since April 1986. I'm really very glad that I know that God is willing to help us to go the right path and that he gives all the support needed. Please tell all our friends, God helps every one who is willing to do His will...."

W.C., Apple Valley, MN. "....The fellowship of SA has really given me a sense of belonging—of being a part of—an understanding of truth, that my butt belongs in that room for that SA meeting, and I belong in that circle, shoulder-to-shoulder, saying the Lord's prayer at the end, for one another's sobriety and for the SA fellowship. Lots of really good people have stood in that circle with me through the years who I've truly come to know and love through my brokenness. Now the gift of love is coming in through the love I've found in my SA family. God is so good."

G.J., Cleveland, OH. "Just a little something to say thanks for this program. Never could I have imagined I would reach seven weeks sobriety...."

J.B., Monterey Park, CA. "Darkness and "light" are sometimes used to symbolize things going on inside of us. The song Starry, Starry Night (sometimes known by the title Vincent) is about the painter, Vincent Van Gogh. One of the lines says, "There is a *darkness* in my soul." In the story of ET, the space visitor has a heart-*light* that visibly glows at times.

Figuratively speaking, it could be said that I lived with darkness inside of me for most of my life. I seldom knew what was going on internally because of totally repressed feelings and self-deluded thinking.

Following the 12-Step program leads to getting acquainted with myself. I uncover, discover, and reveal to others in meetings things that have been hidden inside of me for so long. Perhaps my heart-light is turning on for me and others to see.

In the presence of some people my internal light turns out; but in 12-Step meetings my light usually turns back on again. I now prefer to be with people whose presence helps me to keep my heart-light glowing."

My Ninth Step Work. My Ninth Step work began in march 1987, and the only reason I had was because there is a Ninth Step in the program. I sent a letter to the firm where I worked in 1972 and added a check for the electronic parts that I had stolen. I made another amends similar to this to the hospital where I had worked in 1974.

When I talked to my sponsor about further Ninth Step work, he asked me: "Why do you want to do this?" And I had no answer. (My sponsor hasn't worked much of the program.) But I knew that this step had some importance for me, because I had read the book *Compulsive Overeater* by Bill B. I was thinking about this very much, and when I heard that Bill B. would come to Bad Herrenalb for a seminar, I made a decision to participate in the seminar.

The most important question I wanted to ask him was: "Do you still think the Ninth Step is so very important?" I went to work the following Monday, with no intention of doing a Ninth Step. But the boss called me in and told me that I was close to being fired. I was terribly afraid after that and I went to the American AA meeting that we have in Karlsruhe. I saw a big poster "I am responsible," and remembered what my boss had told me about my responsibilities at work. I called my sponsor on the following Tuesday, told him what had happened, and that I wanted to talk to my boss about my addiction. I was sure that I had no other option. He agreed at once. I knew if I told my boss about my addiction it could be the final straw that broke the camel's back, the best reason to be fired. But there was really no other option.

When I talked to my boss, I said, "I am addicted, my addiction is masturbation, and I'm just like a drug addict or an alcoholic." His answer was, "This is a courageous step." We talked much about addiction and psychotherapy and so on, and he was loving and

understanding. This made me feel very good, as I feel while I'm writing this.

I know that telling about my addiction is not making amends, but this incident is what caused me to start making many amends. One amends I made was to an SA member. I had used sarcasm when I talked about what she said, and I felt I had to make amends immediately. I went to her, put my hand on hers, and said, "I want to make amends to you; I was wrong to use the sarcasm." She said, "No, you did not hurt me." But immediately after I made the decision to approach her, I felt terrific. And this caused others in the group to start making immediate amends. This was creating an environment of love and understanding in the group. When she left, she said, "I'm so glad to know everyone of you".

I have to remember what Bill B. said: "If *I* can do it, *you* can do it." So I know I can go on making amends, even if the prospect of making some is still very terrifying.

One example is making amends to the buyer of the car that I sold in 1979. I signed a paper stating it had no defects, when it did. Because of this, he can file a law suit against me. I intend to amend the wrong by paying him \$300 as a price reduction for the defective car. The terrifying thing is not to loose \$300, but the possibility of a law suit. But I am glad that I found this amends to make, because I know the most difficult and hardest amends enhance my recovery and growth and make it possible for me to realize the Twelve Promises. There are easy amends and hard amends; the hard ones are what do the most for me. I know that even if it takes a lot of willpower to do this, this is the way that makes me feel good in the long run, even if I feel terrible immediately after making the amends.

I've had some spiritual experiences since my talk with my boss. Many times I have felt a great power within me after making amends, and one time I felt somewhat like being put on the right track, on the straight line. So, making amends also means to me "standing straight" in very many cases. If I yell at someone, I cannot take it back, but I can say "I was wrong." I'm still very afraid to say these words, but this is a way to feel good without having a hangover. R.P., Maximiliansau, W. Germany

HAS YOUR *GROUP* TAKEN THE FIRST STEP YET?

We all know how far we get in this program if we as individuals don't have that First Step realization of our utter powerlessness over lust. Nowhere! Have you ever thought there might be such a thing as the *group* or SA as a whole being powerless over lust? If our malady has been telling us anything, it is that none of us as individuals or groups has the power to conquer lust and create sobriety, joy, and freedom. All we have to do is look at the percentage of slippers we have and how much true victory over lust there is (or is not). The profound nature of our problem eventually forces us all back to the First Step.

Can we get so caught up in the apparent "success" of things—the number of newcomers, new groups, conventions, retreats, recognition from the therapeutic profession and the media, status, and respectability—that we lose sight of the *quality of recovery* we must have? Such thinking can cover over the real sickness. Without realizing it, we can turn into a *false* support group where, even without sobriety, we feel better about ourselves while supporting the illness! Yes, this can and does happen!

For a group to admit its powerlessness, its leadership must first accept that fact. That feeling of the swelling ego when we see growing numbers and standing room only in meetings can blind us to the fact that we are really without strength and totally dependent on God for any real sobriety, victory, and true recovery. Numbers don't make sobriety and recovery; they never did!

The Traditions are becoming increasingly important as groups and SA as a whole face new issues and problems. In taking a *group* inventory, we sit down together and judge ourselves against the letter and spirit of our Twelve Traditions. We examine ourselves *as a group* and ask, "How are we doing?" Has your group had an SA Tradition meeting yet? In these, we study one Tradition at a time using the AA *Twelve and Twelve*, much as Steps are studied in Step Study meetings.

Enclosed with this ESSAY is a piece on Meeting Quality. Be sure to read and discuss it with your group in a business meeting. There is something here for all of us to consider. [Ed.]

"My experience has been that once the First Tradition (unity equals the foundation of recovery) is broken, then the entire program loses much of its force. . . .In other 12-Step programs...it's not uncommon to sit through an entire meeting without hearing one mention of God or spirituality or the 12 Steps. . . . Perhaps the only solution for those of us who believe in the classical program is to reach deep into our spiritual resources, work the Steps more assiduously, and above all, stick closer together. We walk by faith, not by sight. Who would have thought on May 9, 1935, that Dr. Bob would find a new friend who would help him to stop killing himself?" Anonymous

SPECIAL REQUEST

From one member we have the following request for help; groups/members are asked to respond from their experience.

"I'd like to hear more about 12th Step work on the group level. We need some kind of tools, protocols, processes, methods for carrying the message to others." R.M. Wash., D.C. Send responses to SA Central Office, Box 300, Simi Valley, CA 93062.

IRS TAX STATUS

Last year, SA received notification from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, that our tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) was now permanent and that "Grantors and contributors may rely on this determination." This means donations to SA are still tax-deductible.

LONER MEMBERS

"Loner" SA members (those who want SA sobriety but are unable to attend existing groups or start new ones) wishing to contact other SA members, please send your name and address to Elizabethann M., P O Box 457, Boulder, MT 59632. For those in prison, the Loner Coordinator is Matt W., P O Box 20412, Kansas City, MO 64195.

1987 Annual Report

FIRST QUARTER

Books	654
Meeting Guides	57
Brochures	3244

Sales	\$7707.87
Donations	\$3930.17
Total Credits	\$11638.04

Total Expenses	\$10512.03
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SECOND QUARTER

Books	716
Meeting Guides	33
Brochures	3927

Sales	\$5585.31
Donations	\$7390.86
Total Credits	\$12976.17

Total Expenses	\$7508.63
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THIRD QUARTER

Books	672
Meeting Guides	51
Brochures	3069

Sales	\$9624.69
Donations	\$5784.75
Total Credits	\$15409.44

Total Expenses	\$16617.69
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FOURTH QUARTER

Books	581
Meeting Guides	55
Brochures	3487

Sales	\$3047.89
Donations	\$8008.22
Total Credits	\$11056.11

Total Expenses	\$12690.19
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SUMMARY

Books	2623
Meeting Guides	196
Brochures	13727

Sales	\$25965.76
Donations	\$25114.00
Total Credit	\$51079.76

Total Expenses	\$47328.54
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SPECIAL NOTE

Requests from the media for members to grant press or radio interviews or appear on TV are on the increase. The enclosed paper, *Publicity and the Twelfth Step*, contains our current policy and the thinking of the Central Office on these matters. Roy is presenting another paper on this subject, *Some Additional Questions and Thoughts on SA and the Media*. All groups and concerned members are urged to read and discuss these papers. Provide any *group* feedback to Central Office.

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