

The Bottom Line

I N H I G H E R P O W E R W E T R U S T

Twelve and Twelve

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over debt—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon DA unity.

To many minds all this liberty for the individual spells sheer anarchy. Every newcomer, every friend who looks at AA for the first time is greatly puzzled. They see liberty verging on license, yet recognize at once that AA has an irresistible strength of purpose and action....

"Those who look closely soon have the key to this strange paradox. The AA member has to conform to the principles of recovery. His life actually depends upon obedience to spiritual principles. If he deviates too far, the penalty is sure and swift; he sickens and dies."

Quoted from Tradition One of The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, copyright 1952 by the AA Grapevine, Inc., and Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing. ♦

Intergroup Notes

The next NY Intergroup sponsored Share-a-Day will be held in the Fall of 1990. Contact one of your Intergroup Representatives if you would like to do any type of service. ♦

A Parable for the New Decade

The Mine

I own a diamond mine. I'm told it has as many diamonds as there are stars in a clear night's sky. I am aware, though, that I don't know the first thing about mining. That's what pressure groups are for. ☞ I call a man and a woman to begin excavations immediately. They agree to oversee operations; they love diamonds. I have to wait a while though. They have their own mines to attend to. I think to myself that they have a lot of nerve. And that I want some of it.

At my first pressure meeting we find out how big the mine really is. It dazzles the mind. First we'll need bushel baskets, then on to trucks. I tell them that I haven't even seen one measly sparkle. They inform me that I need to "turn it over" first. I don't really know what they mean, but I don't protest much.

At the second meeting we enter the mine. I hate it. It is sunless, smelly, and damp as a dishrag. I hear rats. I start to scream. Someone calmly reaches over and turns on my flashlight. I had forgotten I had one. I relax a little. The woman takes me over to a spot on the wall of the cave. It's glistening. "Do you know what this is?" she asks. The man chimes in with, "Of course she does. She's just not used to seeing it." "It's a diamond," I gasp. "Yep." That's all they say.

At the Point of Despair

Sometimes the flashlight beam fades and I don't believe there are any diamonds at all, let alone a whole mine full. I forget what they do—that they shatter a single pin-sized beam of light into a thousand thousands of prisms. I see only coal. It is at this point of despair that the miners tell me to just keep going. They supply more batteries and the beam gets brighter and the gems become visible again. My senses become more tolerant of brilliance. Indeed, they grow thirsty for it.

Despite my temporary lack of vision, I am told to keep a good supply of bushel baskets for the harvest. And not to forget to keep my eyes open along the way, or else I won't be able to recognize what I'm looking for. We start with one stone. That's the first thing.

—Jane P. ♦

Meeting List Changes

If you know of any new or changed meetings, please call and leave a message only from Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm at 718-230-4522. Leave your name and number in case additional information or clarification is needed.

The following are changes to the December 1, 1989 (green) meeting list known to *The Bottom Line*:

New Meetings

- *Emotional Debting*, meets Monday 6:45-8:45pm, at St. Vincent's Hospital, 7th Avenue and 11th Street, Manhattan.
- *HP in the Slope*, meets Friday 7:15pm, at Father Dempsey Center, 61 Park Place, Park Slope, Brooklyn. Regular meeting the first and third Friday of each month; Visions meeting the second and fourth. (This new meeting is on the list.)
- *Gay and Lesbian Visions*, meets Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm, in the Library of NYU's Catholic Center, Thompson Street and Washington Square South, Manhattan.

Suspended Meeting

- *Abundance*, formerly 7:00 pm Monday evenings at the 12 Step Bookstore in the Lower East Village, no longer meets due to the store's demise. The meeting is searching for a new space. ❖

Amazed Before We Are Half Way Through

Dysfunctional Mommy and Daddy believed life never would provide for them. Internalizing their poverty thinking closed off my child to joy, love, money, friendship, and pleasure. But working DA's Twelve Steps exhumed the self-respect to create a vision, and, opening up to Higher Power, I discovered with amazement how copiously the universe endows recovering debtors when I make myself willing to receive abundance.

Last December Citibank "discontinued" my B-job. The severance package included six months full salary and benefits, allowing me to write every day and attend meetings every evening. At my pressure group's suggestion, I gave myself the Dublin Bloomsbury vacation that anorexia had postponed for twenty years because I hadn't "earned" it yet. My pressure group also recommended risking six summer weekends at a sober beach house in the Hamptons, sharing communal recovery with other Fellowship members. After nine months living as a full time writer without scrimping on my other needs, I accepted the prosperous B-job Higher Power presented.

Visions Have No Limits

Confronted by this cornucopia, I assert that my visions have no limits. I debt to myself and the DA Fellowship when I fix arbitrary boundaries on my prosperity. My DA recovery embraces more than jobs and money. Higher Power—a more generous, bountiful parent than Dysfunctional Mommy and Daddy—provides everything necessary to enrich my recovery. Therefore I affirm entitlement to even more plenteous offerings from the universe:

- a Manhattan apartment
- a Twelve Step Fellowship writers support group
- a Twelve Step Fellowship creative artists weekend retreat/summer colony
- a sober, spiritual, solvent lover
- a healing, nurturing, loving vision to share with other men and women.

Higher Power's Abundance

Celebrating Higher Power's abundance, I have made a gratitude offering to the General Service Development Fund, helping DA carry the message of prosperity to debtors everywhere who still suffer from spiritual anorexia and visionary self-deprivation.

—Steve W. ❖

1. International

The New York Times reports "United States banks are being reshaped as the problem of lending too much to the third world countries continues to haunt them. As they are gradually being forced to raise more money to cushion themselves against future loan losses, banks are selling more assets, issuing new stock and pulling out of businesses that are not sufficiently profitable.

"All told, the third world debt crisis has exacted a heavy toll from American banks. It has distracted managements for years, reduced the value of banks' stock, and made them less competitive with other international lending institutions."

As one example, Chase Manhattan Bank expected a \$1.12 billion loss in the third quarter, caused by setting aside reserves against possible defaults on its \$6.2 billion in third world loans.

2. National

From *Newsday's* article "Banks Risking Ruin—Sour real estate loans a serious threat: Third World loan losses at big New York banks and souring real estate markets in the Northeast and Arizona pushed commercial banking into the red last summer for the first time in more than two years, the government said yesterday. The

nation's 12,824 banks lost \$744 million in the July–September quarter, off sharply from \$7 billion in profits in the second quarter and \$7.3 billion in the first three months of the year.

"Regulators are particularly concerned by the rapid rise in

real estate lending. [FDIC Chair] Seidman said real estate loans, which accounted for 25 percent of all commer-

cial bank loans in 1983, now comprise 35 percent of the total." A worst case example is Arizona, where 12.28 percent of all real estate loans are bad.

"The banks' growing problems are reminiscent of the savings and loan industry's massive problems, which led Congress to approve a \$149 billion [taxpayer] bailout of the nation's thrifts earlier this year."

3. Local

"Could Bloomie's Go Bust? Shopaholic owner is in debt" said a *New York Newsday* editorial. "Bloomingdale's is something of a symbol of New York. Trendy, exciting. A department store that catches the spirit of the region's upscale consumers.

"But now Bloomie's itself is up for sale. Not because it has lost its glitter, but because its owner, Toronto-based Campeau Corp., borrowed so much money to build a department store empire that the interest payments are consuming store profits." Other major New York city stores

affected by heavy debt in one way or another include A&S, Stern's, B. Altman, and Macy's.

Newsday summarized the [discredited] idea that high debt was good for business like this: "Buying business assets with costly junk bonds was OK because the discipline of meeting high interest payments would keep management lean and tough. Yet the weight of corporate debt ballooned—leaving companies vulnerable to a fall when the economy slowed and profits slumped. Now that's started and debt-burdened retailers are predictably feeling the heat."

4. East Village

From *Seven Days*: "Now, in the wake of eighties greed—which bottomed out with the stock-market crash of 1987 and the bankruptcy episodes of *thirtysomething*, the hot new peer support group is Debtors Anonymous, where insiders share their

Kind of Makes You Think

experience, strength, and hope in lieu of stock tips. But the road to fiscal responsibility is paved with New Age potholes: one young resident of Manhattan's East Village, two months behind in her rent, told her landlord that she didn't have the money to pay up but not to worry, she was working at 'saying affirmations.'"

—Adam W. ♦

Contributions

Arline S. reports the following contributions to NY Intergroup:

Self Employed Group • Freedom Group • Gay/Lesbian/Bi-Sexual • Visions Too • New Paltz • Saturday at Barts • Matinee Group • Metuchen New Beginnings • Midtown • Westsiders • Prosperity • Integrity • Bellmore.

Suggested Procedure for Treasurers: 1) pay rent, 2) establish a literature fund, 3) hold one month's rent in reserve, 4) distribute the remainder of the funds as follows, 5) mail 60% of the remainder in check or money order made out to "Intergroup D.A." to Debtors Anonymous of Greater New York, 314 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019, 6) mail 30% of the remainder in check or money order made out to "D.A. General Service Board", at P.O. Box 20322, New York, NY 10025-9992, 7) keep 10% of the remainder for your meeting's own use. ❖

Literature

Barbara B. reports that volunteers with at least 90 days of abstinence from compulsive debting and two pressure meetings are needed to sell DA literature on a number of Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, prior to the regular Prosperity meeting at 980 Park Avenue (84th Street). Please leave your name and number with the volunteers there or write to NY Intergroup.

Obtaining DA Literature: Individual DA members purchase literature from their group's Literature Person. Elected Literature Persons purchase literature from NY Intergroup, either Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 pm at St. Ignatius' Undercroft Room, 980 Park Avenue (84th Street,) or the last Wednesday of each month (except for December, when the day moves to the first Wednesday in January,) from 6:30 to 7:00 pm at St. Thomas Church Parish House, 1 West 53rd Street. Literature Persons may exchange any unsold, outdated meeting lists for new ones, and get free replacements for any meeting lists which were given to newcomers. ❖

Vital Statistics

Jay B. reports the following Officers and Representatives attended the November 30, 1989 NY Intergroup meeting:

George C. *Chairperson* • Arline S. *Treasurer* • Jay B. *Recording Secretary* • Barbara B. *Literature Representative* • Pat B. *HotLine Representative* • Hugh S. *The Bottom Line Editor* • Mary Ann D. *Abundance North at New Paltz* • Joan G. *Abundance North at New Paltz* • Larry G. *Bellmore* • Benino H. *Visions Too* • Tamara L. *Sunday Afternoon Steps* • Catherine M. *Metuchen New Beginnings* • Sarita K. *Integrity* • Jane S. *S.O.S.* • Mona S. *BODA at St. Bart's* • Jane P. *Ten Dollar Group* • Carol R. *Sunday Afternoon Steps* • Diana T. *Steps to Solvency*.

NY Intergroup meetings: NY Intergroup meets at 7 pm on the last Wednesday of each month (except for December, when the meeting moves to the first Wednesday in January,) in St. Thomas Church Parish House, 1 West 53rd Street. Each DA group elects two voting Intergroup Representatives and one Alternate. Any DA member may attend. ❖