

2010 ABM Report – Owen H.

Date: October 3, 2010

As many of you know, I was one of two ABM representatives of Greater New York Intergroup at this year's Annual Business Meeting; the other being Katy B.

I would like to share with you some impressions that I kept of the 5 days that I was there.

Although I knew that the ABM would be busy and that I would need to take care of myself, I was surprised to realize just how jam-packed the schedule was: there were events scheduled from 7:30am (breakfast) until 8pm or even 9pm. At many of these events, the presence of a majority of delegates was required because of the need to have a quorum. Perhaps for this reason, it seemed that with few exceptions, there was nearly always perfect attendance.

At the orientation meeting, we each received a binder which was divided into several sections each comprised of various motions and reports, the Conference Service Manual, an Index of Motions and the By-Laws of S.L.A.A. We were encouraged to be familiar with the contents of what were presented with.

Each motion had a particular descriptive format that needed to be explained. For example 10o01/09n14-Motion translates as "2010 Old Business which is now the first item on the agenda this year/in 2009 it was new business and was item number 14" on the agenda. Motions for this year were simpler; for example (10n06) which means New Business Item from the year 2010 and it is item 6 on the agenda.

The agenda was comprised of two categories: motions, which were laid out in the format just referred to and required a vote and IFD's (items for discussion) which required a discussion but no vote.

The business meetings were led by three people: a macro, who facilitated most of the meeting; a micro who supported the macro as a sort-of active co-chair and then there was a back-up. Someone was assigned to take attendance to make sure that those who were present were accounted for and that those who were not present were marked as "absent". Two vote counters were selected for each meeting to count the number of votes. Those who wished to participate in the discussion were invited to line up at either side of the conference room where two microphones had been set up. A person was charged with the service of "spiritual reminder" for times when the discussion inevitably became heated and a spiritual time-out of 30 or 60 seconds was felt to be needed.

An example of one of the motions (10o01/09n14) before the ABM was to change the second-last sentence of the SLAA preamble to from what it currently is to "We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, honoring any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity".

Of those who spoke at the microphone, no one was really opposed to the idea of the inclusion of those of different sexual orientation or gender identity, but what caused difficulty was the word “honor” which, in the opinion of some who spoke seemed to imply, that some groups sought special attention. After much discussion, those who drafted the motion decided to withdraw it.

Other motions, such as the motions pertaining to the sale of S.L.A.A. literature through other channels created heated debate: many were opposed to the idea that S.L.A.A. literature be sold anywhere other than through S.L.A.A.; others pointed out that A.A. literature is available in bookstores and online and S.L.A.A.’s Basic Text could itself be found online. When the first vote was taken, there were 30 for, 16 against and 1 abstention. In such cases where there is a minority opinion, the S.L.A.A. By-Laws permit the minority to share its opinion and to take a re-vote. On the second vote, there were 17 for, 27 against and 3 abstentions. This time the minority were in the fors, so those in favor of the motion were asked to give their opinion at the microphone. A third and final vote was called and this time 24 voted in favor of selling literature through channels other than S.L.A.A.; 27 voted against and 1 person abstained. Because of the variability of the vote, the conference decided by vote that the outcome of this particular motion did not represent group conscience.

One thing that I was not prepared for was the cumulative intensity of the ABM. Towards the end, we were warned that a withdrawal might ensue upon the attendees soon after they left. I didn’t realize how intensely I had connected with some of the people. As it turned out, just about everybody left right after the ABM at the earliest opportunity.

At the meeting we voted on all of the issues that were before us. This was both gratifying and challenging because I found myself, at times, having to make use of Tradition Twelve: principles over personalities.

I am very grateful to have been witness to the process of the ABM to how business is conducted at the national and international level, how the voting process works, how the people volunteer behind the scenes to make the program function and how, in turn, this affects other groups who again affect each other. It helped me to see things in terms of Tradition One: meeting other SLAA members from all over the country and a few others from around the world.