



# *RECOVERY ROAD ONLINE*

## **GROUP UNITY STEP EIGHT**

**ZOOM UP THE HIGHWAY OF HOPE**



## GROUP UNITY STEP EIGHT

*Recovery Road Online should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*

Recovery Road Online will never have a professional class. We have gained some understanding of the ancient words, “Freely ye have received, freely give.” We have discovered that, at the point of professionalism, money and spirituality do not mix. Almost no recovery from compulsive gambling has been brought about by the world’s best professionals, whether medical or religious. We do not decry professionalism in other fields; but we accept the fact that it does not work for us. Every time we have tried to professionalize our Twelfth Step, the result has been exactly the same: our single purpose has been defeated. Compulsive gamblers simply will not listen to a paid Twelfth Stepper. Almost from the beginning, we have been positive that face-to-face work with the compulsive gambler who suffers could be based only on the desire to help and be helped. When a member talks for money, whether at a meeting or to a single newcomer, it can have a very bad effect on him, too. The money motive compromises him and everything he says and does for his prospect. This has always been so obvious that only a very few members have ever worked the Twelfth Step for a fee.

Despite this certainty, it is nevertheless true that few subjects have been the cause of more contention within our fellowship than professionalism.



## GROUP UNITY STEP EIGHT

Secretaries in offices, authors writing books, public relations people appearing on T.V. – all these we have seen hotly assailed because they were, as their critics angrily remarked, “making money out of the fellowship.” Ignoring the fact that these labors were not Twelfth Step jobs at all, the critics attacked, as fellowship professionals, these workers of ours who were often doing thankless tasks that no one else could or would do. Even greater furors were provoked when members wanted to run rehabilitation houses for the broke and down and needy compulsive gamblers. In all these instances, and more, it was claimed that our knowledge and experience were being sold for money; hence, these people were professionals, too.

At last, however, a plain line of cleavage could be seen between professionalism and non-professionalism. When we had agreed that the Twelfth Step couldn't be sold for money, we had been wise. But when we had declared that our fellowship couldn't hire service workers, how could any member carry out knowledge into other fields. We were taking counsel of fear, which today has been largely dispelled in the light of experience.

Take the case of the paid secretaries in offices. We tried volunteers, who were quickly disenchanted. They just didn't show up. Even more important, an empty office couldn't answer its telephone; but it was an open invitation to a compulsive gambler, who was gambling and who possessed a spare key. So, someone had to look after the place full time. If





## GROUP UNITY STEP EIGHT

we hired a compulsive gambler for the same job, the job was not to be Twelfth Step work. It was to make Twelfth Step work possible. It was a service proposition, pure and simple. Our fellowship itself could not function without full-time workers. At the board, we couldn't employ non-compulsive gamblers as secretaries; we had to have people who knew the fellowship pitch. But the minute we hired a member, or someone from a compulsive gamblers family, the ultra-conservative and fearful ones shrilled, "Professionalism!"

At one period, the status of these faithful servants was almost unbearable. At times they were actually shunned by fellow members. Even the most charitably disposed described them as a "necessary evil". Such a person could surely not be called a professional member. They were not professionalizing the Twelfth Step; but just making it possible. They were helping to give the person writing, calling, or coming in the door, the break they ought to have. Volunteer committee people and assistants could be of great help, but they could not be expected to carry this load, day in and day out. At the board, the same story repeats itself. Several hundred pieces of literature per month, sacks of bulletins put out per month, letters on every subject, from broken-hearted spouses to the growing pains of the groups, do not package and channel themselves all over the world. Right contacts



## GROUP UNITY STEP EIGHT

with the world outside must be maintained. Our fellowship's lifelines have to be tended. So, we may hire secretaries. We pay them well; they earn what they get! They are professional secretaries, but they certainly are not professional members.

Perhaps the fear will always lurk in every member's heart that one day our name will be exploited by someone, for real cash. Even the suggestion of such a thing never fails to whip up a hurricane; and, we have discovered that hurricanes have a way of mauling, with equal severity, both the just and the unjust. They are always unreasonable.

There is no doubt in my mind that someday Recovery Road Online members will be asked to accept employment with outside agencies, dealing with the compulsive gambling problem. A university may want a Recovery Road Online member to educate the public on compulsive gambling. A city may want a social worker experienced and who understands the compulsive gambling problems. Would these be branded as professionalism under RRO Unity? We think not. Members who select such full-time careers do not professionalize Recovery Road Online's Twelfth Step. Of course, this conclusion will be a long and rocky one. At first, we could not see the real issue involved. When a member hired out to such enterprises, he was immediately tempted to use the fellowship name for publicity or fund-raising purpose. Unthinkingly, members so employed,





## GROUP UNITY STEP EIGHT

may recklessly break anonymity for their pet enterprise. For this reason, some very good cases may arise, and all connected with them will suffer unjust criticism from fellowship groups. You will again hear the cry, “Professionalism! That guy will be making money out of Recovery Road Online.” Yet, not a single one of them had been hired to do RRO’s Twelfth Step work. The violation, in these instances, was not professionalism at all; it was breaking anonymity. The fellowship’s sole purpose was being compromised; the name was being misused.

It is significant, now that almost no member in our fellowship breaks anonymity at the public level, that nearly all these fears have subsided. We see that we have no right or need to discourage RROs who wish to work as individuals in these wider fields. We cannot declare Recovery Road Online such a closed corporation that we keep our knowledge and experience “Top Secret”. If a Recovery Road Online member, acting as a citizen, can become a better researcher, educator, or personnel officer, then why not? Everyone gains and we have lost nothing. True, some of the projects to which members have attached themselves have been ill-conceived; but that makes not the slightest difference with the principals involved. This is the exciting welter of events which has finally cast up Recovery Road Online unity of non-professionalism. Our Twelfth Step is never to be paid for; but those who labor in service for us are worthy of their lives.