<u>A PROPOSAL FOR HANDLING OF FINANCES</u>

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There are a few things I would like to say about the handling of finances. For example, there seems to be quite a misunderstanding between the field and the Atlanta office as to the way finances are handled. Of course, we all appreciate efficiency, but there comes a time when you can't be bothered with such details as getting a receipt for monies you have spent (they may have become lost), or monies you are about to spend (they may not even be in existence).

This then, is where comes the hang-up. You don't have the receipts, or the job-estimates (such as in auto repairs) for the monies to be spent or which have been spent. What do you do then ? Experience tells me that you have to wait until a thorough going over of endless details is necessary before/and/or if you get said money. There seems to be a feeling that people in the field are conspiring to steal money from the treasury for personal use rather than for legitimate use in the project.

I would like to state at the outset: this has not been the case with me. On the other hand, I know of many complaints from many project areas. These projects are neglected because they experience the aforementioned difficulties. Other than this, I think the reasons for this condition can be and are manifold. One or several can be discussed: The person in charge of disbursing finances doesn't know the person requesting the funds; therefore, she questions the relevance of paying out such funds. Now, this in itself is admirable because she is looking out for the treasury and is unwilling to waste money. However, this does nothing for the field secretary who has financial obligations to meet. Frustrations arise and there is a feeling of animosity between field staff and those in finance. And it spreads.

A point of frustration: when a check for a certain bill is sent to the person or firm which has done the billing instead of to the project director, this tends to undermine the confidence of the biller in the project director. What does this do ? For the most part, it, in turn, diminishes the confidence of the project director in the Atlanta offic e. And the local biller feels then that he can no longer deal directly with the field secretary, but rather with theAtlanta office. And a minor miracle occurs when the project director does not throw up his hands in resignation and disgust and leaves. Can we afford this ? I think not!

We field secretaries and project directors were given to understand that the Atlahta office was there to serve the field. This does not always seem to be the case. If it is true that the Atlanta office is there for service, then the following suggestions, I think are in order, at least for discussion and perhaps improvement, as the case may be.

(1) A financial committee be established to augment the duties of the bookkeeper and the accountant. This committee should have extensive knowledge of field situations. This committee should be sympathetic and knowledgeable of field staff needs. They should be directly responsible to the coordinating committee. Furthermore, they should be subject to quarterly review by the coordinating committee.

(2) The main qualification of the finance committee should be that of sympathy toward the needs of the field. And if possible, the committee should be composed of one person from each major area of staff involvement.* This committee should meet at a central place to be decided upon: atleast twice a month, around the 10th and the 25th.

(3) The field staff should be advised of the financial status of the main office around the end of the month. This should help the various projects to determine how much above the regular budget he can depend upon to meet emergency financial situations.

(4) The field staff should be required to state at least 5 days prior to the actual writing of checks, the ampunts of money needed for their projects which would be above the actual projected budget.

(5) In cases of complaints, these should be handled by the finance committee which should attempt to take immediate action: i.e. follow up, investigation, etc., and order immediate disbursement of the requested funds if need be.

* State Project areas.

As suggested above, this is not intended to be a cure-all. Rather this is presented as a guideline for discussion. There should be room for responsibility on both sides. But, something should come out of this conference which deals effectively with the problem of handling finances.