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August 10, 1994

To: All Conference Members

From: W.J. (Jim) Estelle, Jr. – Chairperson, General Service Board

Re: **Mexican Copyright Situation**

Dear Friends,

By now, most of you have probably received a package of mail from Mexico. The mailing list may have been taken from a 1993 Conference Report, as we believe the package was not sent to Panel 44 delegates. We are enclosing a copy of the package for the Panel 44 delegates and if any others of you did not receive the mailing, contact Pat at G.S.O. for copies. As briefly as possible, this is the background of the situation:

- The Conference Charter of the United States and Canada provides (The A.A. Service Manual, S31), "In countries where a General Service Structure exists, the United States/Canada Conference will delegate sole right to publish our Conference-approved literature to the General Service Board of that structure." Complying with the Charter, A.A.W.S. has historically granted licenses to foreign General Service Boards to publish approved translations of A.A.W.S. copyrighted literature. The exclusive licenses carry with them the right to protect the licenses (copyrights) in their countries. Without this right the exclusive license would afford no protection.
- We have been aware of the Mexican unity problems since the mid-1980s when "Seccion Mexico" was formed as a new service board out of what had been some areas in their Mexican General Service Conference ("Central Mexicana") structure. Since this occurred, we have continually appealed to the Mexican A.A.s to work towards resolving their differences and achieve unity. Three of our general managers – John Bragg, Wayne Parks, and George Dorsey – have all urged them to come together and attempt to resolve their difficulties.
- Board members from Seccion Mexico visited G.S.O. (in the late 1980s) regarding permission to publish A.A.W.S. – copyrighted literature. The request was declined on the basis that the preexisting service board held the exclusive license.

- Section Mexico proceeded to publish AAWS-copyrighted material. Wayne Parks, and John Bragg before him, wrote Section Mexico regarding the copyright violations. Section Mexico refused to discontinue the sale of the materials.
- AAWS took no action absent an indication as to what the Central Mexicana Conference wanted to do – again feeling it was a Mexican problem and hoping they would find a way to resolve it. In late 1993, the Central Mexicana Board advised GSO that their Conference had requested that they take action to stop Seccion Mexico's publication of materials for which Central Mexicana possessed the exclusive license.
- The Central Mexicana Board was advised by their lawyers that the Mexican courts would require a letter from AAWS requesting or authorizing legal action. AAWS balked at the proposed language and finally sent a letter stating simply that AAWS had "no objection" to action taken in their own name to protect the copyrights licensed to them. Had this not been done, the exclusive license AAWS had given the Central Mexicana Board and the position they had taken regarding their role as sole publisher in Mexico would have been ineffective.
- *AAWS was not a party to the Mexican legal action, did not pay for it, or control it. AAWS receives no income from literature published by Central Mexicana.
- In conversations with the general manager of GSO, Central Mexicana and with their board members, we have continuously counseled restraint and repeatedly offered whatever help we could give to resolve differences. We have had no communication with or appeal from Section Mexico since they rejected Wayne Parks request prior to the package sent to Conference members.

A present and former board member of Section Mexico visited GSO and met with the general manager on August 9, 1994. They delivered the enclosed letter. The response, also attached, was given to them before they left.

We believe that this is an internal Mexican AA problem. We are gathering input to determine what response should be made. We do not feel that any of us should jump to conclusions, take precipitous action, or do much else at this point but pray for the continued sobriety and improved unity of our friends in Mexico.

We have once again made known our offer to be of any possible assistance, whatever, that could be of help to our Mexican friends in resolving their differences. You can be sure our Conference members will be kept informed.

With warm regards,

Jim Estelle

*[*Note from editor: ...this is not true. Consider the following quote from AAWS General Manager George D. concerning the foreign licensing agreements, "Our licensing agreements have also included a REQUIREMENT that the necessary actions to protect the copyrights which were licensed." So, contrary to AAWS statement that they had no part in Central Mexicana's suing Section Mexico, this is not true...Central Mexicana had to sue, according to AAWS's licensing agreement.*