



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

CABLE WATCHTOWER

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December 5, 1985

TO ALL CIRCUIT AND DISTRICT OVERSEERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

This is a supplement to our letter dated December 1, 1985. We would like to take the opportunity to review with you some matters that are unique to your activities and that affect only the work of traveling overseers in this country.

EXPENSES AND INSURANCE CLAIMS

Over the years in many ways you brothers and your wives have continued to "gladly spend and be completely spent" for the good of the brothers. (2 Cor. 12:15) We encourage you to continue in this self-sacrificing course. We know that we can count on you to look for ways to control the growing expenses connected with the acquisition and maintenance of cars, trailers, and apartments, as well as special foods, etc. (Compare 2 Thess. 3:7, 8.) Also, with your best interest in mind, we request that if you have problems with an insurance claim that should be cared for under the group plan for traveling overseers, please correspond first with the Society, rather than writing to the agency or making complaints to the carrier or state insurance commission. By first contacting the Society, you can be advised of the appropriate course to take.

SOME CLARIFICATIONS ON THEOCRATIC PROCEDURE

How should we deal with inactive unbaptized persons who were 'approved associates' in the past and have now become involved in wrongdoing, or who were involved in wrongdoing while active, but were inactive when it came to light? If the individual has not been associated with the congregation for years and is not known as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, nor claims to be such, the congregation elders do not need to make extensive inquiry about his conduct. They can, though, make note in the congregation file so that if the individual later desires to associate with the congregation the matter can be considered to the extent necessary. The elders must use good judgment as to when they should pursue such matters judicially. It must be remembered that 'approved associates' are not formal members of the congregation since they are not baptized and there could be legal problems. However, it would be appropriate to deal with approved associates, whether active or inactive, who can have a damaging effect on the spirituality of the congregation and who continue to associate with the brothers. As with dedicated publishers, if there is any legal threat, the Society should be notified.

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Should cases of child abuse be reported to the civil authorities?
When questions come up on reporting child abuse matters to the authorities, it would be best to have the brothers communicate with the Society on the matter without you expressing a judgment inasmuch as the legal requirements vary from state to state and the circumstances of each case vary also.

Could secretly eavesdropping on an extension telephone cause legal liability? Yes, in at least one state. The California Supreme Court has ruled recently that secretly listening to another person's telephone conversation is a violation of state privacy laws.

On behalf of members of the congregation applying for citizenship, should elders provide letters explaining our beliefs? No. It is unnecessary and inadvisable for elders to provide details on our beliefs in a letter. Likewise, it is unwise to provide information in letters regarding what a person can or cannot do as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Each individual Witness has the responsibility to state what he or she believes. However, there is no objection to providing a letter merely confirming that a brother or sister is a dedicated and baptized Witness. A letter of this nature is usually addressed: "To Whom It May Concern." It usually sets forth the name of the person, his or her address and baptism date, and confirms that the person in question is one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

You should caution the elders to not provide the May 22, 1980 letter entitled "MEMORANDUM CONCERNING UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP" to the brothers or other individuals. Some elders, although having good intentions, have done this and later some unnecessary problems developed. If brothers make inquiries on this subject information can be given to them only. Bear in mind that it is not necessary to be a citizen in order to preach the good news. The Constitution of the United States guarantees freedom of press, speech, assembly and worship to all persons, including aliens. The only things citizens have that aliens do not have are certain privileges granted by the government.

We hope this information is helpful in assisting you with the work of providing good direction to the congregations you serve. We are certainly pleased to have you as our "fellow workers for the Kingdom of God," and with this letter we send a warm expression of our Christian love and best wishes.--Colossians 4:11.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. V. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.