



NATURE COAST JOURNAL

SEPTEMBER 2020



ELECTIONS

In the spirit of the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts of Service, District 28 and Nature Coast Intergroup will be looking to rotate out some Committee Chairs and Officers before the end of the year. Nominations will be accepted at the October Business Meetings and Elections will be conducted at the November Business Meetings. If you feel you would like to volunteer for Service Work please plan on attending the October Business Meetings. If you know someone who might be interested in Service but may not see this article please ask them to come to the October Meetings also. The October Business Meetings of District 28 and Nature Coast Intergroup are scheduled to run concurrently at 2pm on Sunday October 4th. The meeting will be at the outside pavilion of the Nature Coast Church, 5113 South Suncoast Blvd, Homosassa, FL 34446. If you would like to have District 28 DCM Bob M. or Intergroup Chair Ingrid R. contact you before the October Meetings please send email address and/or phone number to news@ncintergroup.com.

Service Work is always about carrying the message to the next suffering alcoholic and of course Bill has advised us that nothing as much assures our sobriety as this kind of effort. Those of us who have taken the plunge can affirm that it has been a source of personal growth as well as a wonderful opportunity to enable the still suffering Alcoholic to find the help that was so freely given to us.

My thoughts on the Evolution of AA.

by Dean B.

The life and recovery of a drunk, especially the alcoholic, has always been misunderstood and the suffering to all those involved immense. So how did we get from going to our local AA meeting in town to logging onto a computer and Zooming all over the world for a meeting?

I am not going to talk about the beginning of time, or references in the Bible, or the treatment of drunkards in other countries. I am going back to what should have worked and what works well. So, a little history to get to Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the mid 1700's, various Native American tribes created 'Circles', or abstinence-based cultural revitalization movements and temperance organizations. (Although not mentioned in the Alcoholics Anonymous literature, one of the earliest equivalents of AA's 12 steps and "Big Book" was the orally-transmitted teachings of the Gai'wiiò of Ganioda'yo—the Good Message of Handsome Lake—later known as the Code of Handsome Lake. What most Native recovery pioneering movements shared was an expectation of personal sobriety, the use of ancestral teachings to anchor that sobriety, and a code of moral conduct.)

In the early 1800's, Dr. Benjamin Rush called for the creation of a 'Sober House' for the care of the confirmed drunkard. Dr. Rush didn't want people to stop drinking entirely, but it's clear that some of his writings may have ..(continued on page 3)...

HOTLINE 352-621-0599

Steps | Traditions | Concepts

Step 9:

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Tradition 9:

A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they service.

Concept 9:

Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of A.A. must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous

“What it was like, What happened, and What it is like now”

Your story could appear in an upcoming issue.

**Send your stories, poems, articles, and anniversary lists to
News@Ncintergroup.com**

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Make checks payable to NFAC and send to:

P.O. Box 10094
Jacksonville FL 32247

General Service Office

P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

Washington Pledge

**We, whose names are affixed, desirous of forming a society
for our natural benefit, and to guard against a pernicious practice,
which is injurious to our health, standing and families ~
we do pledge ourselves as gentlemen, not to drink
any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider.**

(continued from front page)... inspired some to join the temperance movement later in the 19th century.

The Washingtonian movement (Washingtonians, Washingtonian Temperance Society or Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society) was a 19th-century temperance fellowship founded on Thursday, April 2, 1840 by six alcoholics at Chase's Tavern on Liberty Street in Baltimore, Maryland. The idea was that by relying on each other, sharing their alcoholic experiences and creating an atmosphere of conviviality, they could keep each other sober. Total abstinence from alcohol (teetotalism) was their goal. The group taught sobriety and preceded Alcoholics Anonymous by almost a century. Members sought out other "drunkards" (the term alcoholic had not yet been created), told them their experiences with alcohol abuse and how the Society had helped them achieve sobriety. With the passage of time the Society became a prohibitionist organization in that it promoted the legal and mandatory prohibition of alcoholic beverages. The Washingtonians differed from other organizations in the temperance movement in that they focused on the individual alcoholic rather than on society's greater relationship with liquor. In the mid-19th century, a temperance movement was in full sway across the United States and temperance workers advanced their anti-alcohol views on every front. Public temperance meetings were frequent and the main thread was prohibition of alcohol and pledges of sobriety to be made by the individual. Washingtonians at their peak numbered in the tens of thousands, possibly as high as 600,000. However, in the space of just a few years, this society all but disappeared because they became fragmented in their primary purpose, becoming involved with all manner of controversial social reforms including prohibition, sectarian religion, pol-

itics and abolition of slavery. It is believed that Abraham Lincoln attended and spoke at one of the great revivals, presumably not for treatment, but out of interest in various issues being discussed. The Washingtonians drifted away from their initial purpose of helping the individual alcoholic, and disagreements, infighting, and controversies over prohibition eventually destroyed the group. The Washingtonians became so thoroughly extinct that, some 50 years later in 1935 when William Griffith Wilson ("Bill") and Dr. Robert Smith ("Dr. Bob") joined together in forming Alcoholics Anonymous, neither of them had ever heard of the Washingtonians.

By the 1870s' the New York State Inebriate Asylum, the first in the country, is opened in Binghamton, NY. A growing network of inebriate asylums will treat alcoholism and addiction to a growing list of other drugs: opium, morphine, cocaine, chloral, ether, and chloroform. The opening of the Martha Washington Home in Chicago marks the first institution in America that specialized in the treatment of inebriate women. Jerry McAuley opens the Water Street Mission in New York City, marking the beginning of the urban mission movement. This movement, spread across America by the Salvation Army, caters its message and services to the "Skid Row." By 1900, as inebriate homes and asylums close, alcoholics are relegated to city "drunk tanks," "cells" in "foul wards" of public hospitals, and the backwards of aging "insane asylums." Wealthy alcoholics/addicts will continue to seek discrete detoxification in private sanatoria known as "jitter joints," "jag farms" or "dip shops." In 1901, Charles B. Towns Hospital was located at 293 Central Park West in Manhattan. When the Towns started the hospital in 1901, and the roaring twenties and the increase in alcoholism made it successful, however, after *(continued on page 4)*

(continued from page 3) the stock market crash of 1929 admissions to the hospital had significantly declined. The hospital aimed at drying out the well-to-do patient. It was an expensive detoxification facility and one was not admitted unless the fee was paid in advance or a backer guaranteed to pay the fee which in those days was \$200 to \$350 for a five day stay. At this time the Chief of Staff was Dr. William Duncan Silkworth. Silkworth had lost all his savings in the market collapse and he had come to Towns to help alcoholics.

By the early 1930's the Oxford Group, a Christian organization founded by the American Christian missionary Frank Buchman. Buchman believed that the root of all problems were the personal problems of fear and selfishness. Further, Buchman believed that the solution to living with fear and selfishness was to surrender one's life over to God's plan. Buchman was an American Lutheran minister of Swiss descent who in 1908 had had a conversion experience in an evangelical chapel in Keswick, England, when he attended a decisive sermon by Jessie Penn-Lewis in the course of the 1908 Keswick Convention. As a result of that experience he would in 1921 found a movement called A First Century Christian Fellowship. By 1931 the Fellowship had become known as the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group enjoyed wide popularity and success, particularly in the 1930s. Ebby Thacher or Ebby T., was an old drinking friend and later the sponsor of Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill Wilson.



He is credited with introducing Wilson to the initial principles that AA would soon develop, such as "one alcoholic talking to another," and the Jungian thesis which was passed along to Rowland Hazard and, in turn, to Thacher that alcoholics could recover by a "genuine conversion". Thacher was a school friend of Wilson, and battled his whole life with alcoholism, frequently landing in mental hospitals or jail. After one bender, three members of The Oxford Group, convinced the court to parole Thacher into their custody. Hazard taught Thacher the Oxford Group principles and the idea that a conversion was needed between patients. Hazard lodged him in the Calvary Rescue Mission, operated by the Calvary Episcopal Church in New York City. In November 1934, Thacher had arranged a visit to Wilson's apartment. Expecting to spend a day drinking and re-living old times, Wilson was instead shocked by Thacher's refusal to drink. "I've got religion," he reportedly said, to Wilson's surprise. Thacher told Wilson of his conversion at the Rescue Mission and acquainted Wilson with the teachings of Rowland Hazard about the Oxford Group life-changing program, as well as the prescription of Carl Jung for a conversion.

Wilson at first declined Thacher's invitation to sobriety, and continued to drink in a more restrained way for a short while. After talking with Dr. William D. Silkworth, however, he went to Calvary Rescue Mission and underwent a religious conversion; he was then admitted to the Charles B. Towns Hospital for Drug and Alcohol Addiction in New York City on December 11, 1934. Thacher visited him there on December 14.

Five months after his spiritual experience, Bill W. went on a business trip to Akron -- away from home. The business venture failed. He found himself dejected and depressed standing in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel. At one end of the lobby the hotel bar was opened. At the other end there was a telephone booth.

Suddenly the urge for a drink came upon him. He panicked! The feeling of panic assured him he still had some sanity left. He remembered that while trying to help other alcoholics 'he' remained sober. So he took action. He phoned (continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4) a number of church ministries in that area asking to meet and speak with another drunk. As puzzling as this must have seemed to the ones answering his calls, Bill W. finally struck gold. A call to Episcopal minister Rev. Walter Tunks, got him in contact with an Oxford Group member Henrietta Seiberling, a non-alcoholic, whose group had been trying for two years to help a desperate alcoholic named Dr. Bob Smith.

From page 196, 4th Edition Alcoholics Anonymous: I had much difficulty in reaching A.A. in New York, as A.A. wasn't as well-known then. I finally spoke to a woman, Bobbie, who said words I hope I never forget: "I am an alcoholic. We have recovered. If you want, we'll help you." She told me about herself and added that many other drunks had used this method to stop drinking. What impressed me most in this conversation was the fact that these people, five hundred miles away, cared enough to try to help me. Here I was, feeling so sorry for myself, convinced that no one cared whether I was dead or alive. I was very surprised when I got a copy of the Big Book in the mail the following day. And each day after that, for nearly a year, I got a letter or a note, something from Bobbie or from Bill or one of the other members of the central office in New York. In October 1944, Bobbie wrote: "You sound very sincere and from now on we will be counting on you to perpetuate the Fellowship of A.A. where you are. You will find enclosed some queries from alcoholics. We think you are now ready to take on this responsibility." She had enclosed some four hundred letters that I answered in the course of the following weeks. Soon, I began to get answers back.

I knew none of this in 1984 when I was realized I couldn't quit drinking. Nor did I need to. So, how does one find AA and get sober today? For me it took a phone call to my employers EAP rep and I ended up in the same New York State Inebriate Asylum my father had been committed to, only in my time it was a Psychiatric Center. That's where I was introduced to AA. After a few months I had acquired meeting lists with locations of AA meetings in my community. On those meeting lists was a phone number of our local Hotline for help and information. We had no cell

phones and the internet was in it's infancy. Over the years as technology advanced you no longer needed to rely on our 'AA International Directory' to find a meeting when traveling out of town, state, or country; just Google AA meetings wherever you're heading. But since March 2020 with the COVID virus shutting down meetings, members of Alcoholics Anonymous took the technology and started 'Virtual Meetings' or digital platforms in the same various formats as our regular meetings. So, now we have the ability to attend a meeting anywhere in the world so long as we have a device with an internet connection.

Walking into an AA meeting on your own for the very first time can be a frightening thing. We are alone, doubt we'd even know anyone, thoughts of what to expect, what will they think, what will I have to do, or say. Usually we are greeted at the door with a warm welcome, a handshake, and directions to the coffee. They pass a basket for expenses if we have money to put into it. If we show up on a regular basis we usually know the 'regulars' at the meeting, and more often than not we are 'volunteered' to make coffee, set up chairs and tables, greet others, or any number of various service positions. We start feeling good about ourselves again for maybe the first time in it seems forever because someone trusted us. If we are lucky we have gotten to know the 'regulars' on a more personal nature. We may have even been told to sit down and shut up, you have nothing to say we need to hear. You may even have either gotten a sponsor or assigned one. Someone may even have given you a Big Book to read. After a while you may have begun working on the steps of (continued on page 6)



(continued from page 5) the program. Somewhere along the lines you've enjoyed the applause of celebration for staying sober with a plastic chip, been enjoying the fellowship after the meeting with an invite for a cup of coffee and slice of pie. Your sponsor may have even taken you on a 12 step call to help another drunk. You may even have gotten involved with your local intergroup or district. Maybe even made it to an area assembly seeing other members make decisions for the good of AA. Do we take to take 'going to any length..' for granted today?

March 2020. The pandemic hits and meetings begin to shut down. Government mandates and personal opinions, all outside issues, will not be discussed here.

Church meetings were some of the first to close. Some meetings stayed open when the local entities determined they were 'essential'. Some began to meet outdoors. Members that were at a greater risk were staying home. How were people to stay sober? How were newcomers, our 'life blood', to get to a meeting?

In our district; the Nature Coast Intergroup Webmaster started a Message Board on the website to discuss topics of concern. They were not supported well by the membership, whether it was too difficult or whether the site wasn't visited often enough. Then came Virtual Meetings. One of the tools ended up as Zoom. Now, at the click of a mouse with a meeting code and password you could attend AA meetings 24/7, all around the world. GSO began listing them at

<https://aa-intergroup.org/>, various websites began listing them, <https://www.thetokenshop.com/> one of the most common. Locally, our Intergroup Journal Editor started a virtual meeting at 4 pm every day. Once the Intergroup Webmaster got a camera, he started the noon NCI/Dist28 Open Discussion Meeting. The 'young people' started the Crystal River Group. Other groups began to follow suit. Now locally we have: the Resentment Group Monday, Women to Women, Wonder Women Workbook, Women's New Beginnings, Step Up Sisters, Friday Night Speaker Meeting, and Saturday Night Open Talk Meeting.

But still, what about the newcomer? I don't know about anyone reading this but I didn't have much of anything when I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, let alone a cell phone or computer. Heck, I still used a rotary dial phone, a black and white tv that you needed to change channels manually. Well, I was assured by Chris G., our Hotline Chair, that though calls had increased, people were still being directed to what meetings there were that were open, were getting into detoxes, and rehab centers. Then I began to see something I hadn't expected. New people were showing up at virtual meetings. Relapsers were showing up. The elderly, that like me, were becoming a bit more computer savvy. The suggestion of doing 90 meetings in 90 days not only became a reality but the possibility of doing 90 meetings or more in 30 days was possible for those that were confined to their homes. Those who had use to going to only one meeting a week now began showing up daily to virtual meetings. People were celebrating anniversaries online. Friendships were made with members one only dreamed of, whether in New Zealand, St. Louis, Texas, Canada, etc. I thought of how wonderful it was to travel around the world at any time of day or night and though I wasn't really sure where I was, that wasn't important. I was in an AA meeting. That's all that really mattered, and everything was okay.

Alcoholics Anonymous has proven resilient. The adage 'going to any length' and 'you will be amazed before you are half way through' has proven valuable. It works in spite of us.





Those Crazy AA Slogans Set Me Free

By Steve N.

Part VI

Honesty, Open Mindedness and Willingness.

“Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.”
Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous – Appendix II Spiritual Experience page 567



Much can be said about Willingness, Honesty and Open Mindedness. The first thing that comes to mind is the acronym of HOW. These three words are keys to the steps. Apply HOW. Honesty, Open mindedness and Willingness.

How do I get sober? it begins with HOW. Honest with myself, Open-minded to new ideas, and Willingness to try them.

The type of honesty that I am looking for here is being honest with self. In the beginning, I don't have to be honest with anyone else, but with a little self-reflection, from an honest perspective, I can see how my substance use affected or caused negative situations in my life. This deeper honesty that I am referring to, is inward only. That is all that is needed in the beginning.

Next is Open Mindedness. If I am closed minded to anything, then I begin to shut down to growth, living life to the full potential and for positive change. By applying the logic of open mindedness to recovery, new ideas, new concepts, spirituality, and the steps, I could potentially find the solution to many problems I have. Open mindedness seems to be a principle worth having. There is more than meets the eye, more information in the pictures when i look at the background, and if I remain open minded, I become teachable.

This leads to the final clause, however in my opinion, it is the most important. Willingness.

Willingness is the key. I didn't become willing until I hurt bad enough. in my experience, willingness came when I became tired of living my life a certain way.

Pain is a great teacher, and usually motivates to change. In effect pain creates willingness. So as a result of wrong living, I ended up in some painful situations, and in turn willingness to change was created. I developed the willingness through pain, through suffering through making mistakes.

So if you're hurting and tired of living life a certain way, and wanting change, remember the acronym of HOW. Be willing to go to any length for your recovery, be open minded to new ideas and principles, and be honest enough with yourself to know when you're falling back to old patterns.

(continued on page 8)



**90 meetings in 90 days
WHY 90 in 90?**

**It Allows You to Get to Know the Others in the Group
It Forms a New Habit**

When I came into A.A. I had completely isolated and was separated from the rest of humanity. Loneliness was one of the defining traits of this alcoholic. In recovery when I first made a connection to the group as a whole... I realized that I was part of a community of people who understand how they feel, where they have been, and what they have thought. I didn't come into A.A. looking for friends, but I have made deep lasting connections. It also was simple. I needed a new habit – one that did not involve drinking. 90 straight days of doing the same activity over and over – going to a meeting – is what imprinted the new habit into my subconscious mind. Once a habit has been formed and it becomes second nature, it makes it that much more likely that that action will be repeated often over the long-term.

Stick With The Winners

A winner is someone in recovery who is “doing the deal.” In other words, someone who is actively working their program, i.e.:

- Someone who has a sponsor, has finished their steps and is taking others through theirs
- Someone who actively participates in meetings and has commitments.
- Someone who has a solid trust in their higher power.
- Someone who has a generally positive and healthy hold on life.



Staying connected to these people is not only crucial to your sobriety, but it's easy, and life changing! All you have to do is step out of your comfort zone a little. It may feel weird at first, but I guarantee if you approach that person after a meeting, not only will they be ecstatic to meet you, but the encounter will make you feel all warm and fuzzy afterwards. It's the most natural high in the world, and it never fails.

We come into these rooms like newborns. Cluelessly feeling our way through this new life and all the suggestions and “rules” we must follow, all the while battling our emotions and character defects. It can be very exhausting without some strong shoulders to lean on. We first must admit that we can't do this alone. If you're like me, that was a pretty hard pill to swallow, I hated asking for help, and I never wanted to be a burden. But A.A. taught me to finally reach out to the other alcoholics who were so desperately trying to help me when I was struggling. Sticking with the winners gave me strength when times were tough. It supplied me with a network of like-minded people who understood my pain, because they had been through what I was going through. They are all still important to my sobriety and they are all my friends.

It is so easy to get wrapped up in the idea that we should be somewhere at a certain amount of time and this saying cut away at that myth. It reminds us that there is no destination in life, beyond the final one, and that it is what occurs along the way that is important. Your recovery will not move in a linear fashion towards a finishing line, but rather it will take you on winding roads of self-discovery.

A long journey begins with a single step. The destination may be unknown, but the scenery is magnificent and constantly changes along the way.

(continued on page 9)



When I stopped drinking alcohol 12 years ago I thought that was it. I'm sober now. Job done. As long as I remember how bad it was and how difficult it was to change day zero into Day One, I will not, need not, drink again. While that may be true, A.A. taught me how to "trudge the happy road of destiny." My thoughts and feelings around drinking and sobriety continue to evolve. The further removed I become from my world of booze, the more I see how awful it was. As my sober clock ticked away I worried I would forget this reality and fall into the trap of "I wasn't that bad really". In fact, the opposite is true. How did I let it get so bad? But the real me is here now and I'm still surprised by the joy of the journey. Nothing needs to approach perfection anymore and an acceptable standard does not disappoint. Serenity,, ever elusive, is now evident in the life I live in sobriety. I cannot thank you people enough for the changes and growth that keeps on occurring.



"Keep coming back, it works if you work it," which reminds people that if they stick with the AA program they will benefit greatly from it in the future. It works if you work it. This is solid advice that can be applied to just about any positive behavior, right? If you eat right and stick with it, you'll reap health benefits. If you speak up for yourself consistently, you'll reap relationship benefits (yes, really). If you notice and act on intuitive guidance repeatedly, you'll reap whole-life benefits. Notice a theme here? You have to stick with it!

**ALCOHOLICS
ANONYMOUS**

**Keep coming back, it works
if you work it, so work it
your worth it. - AA**

Positive changes typically start with a decision and progress into a mindset, but the real magic is in the work. Positive thinking will only get you so far. In order to see real results you have to do the work.

The rooms of A.A taught me that there is nothing magical about the information in the program, nothing that will magically cure you just by hearing it. But if you do the work, if you turn the words into practices, you can make progress. That means doing the steps, reading what they call the Big Book, going to meetings, working with your sponsor. Not half-assed, but really doing it. I came in not believing I was worth it. You folks told me often that I was worth it, so I did work it; I am to this day. I cannot describe the difference it makes to work the program. But when I slack off, there is a big difference in my thinking and behavior – thinking and behavior I do not wish to return to. One of my friends in A.A. says if the old behavior is still here, it isn't old behavior is it?

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When we've taken steps one and two, we have learned and accepted that our lives are unmanageable, we are alcoholics and a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

What if we were to surrender the manageability part? We can surrender a lifetime of self-will run amok by making the decision to turn it all over to a Higher Power and allow someone and something to care for us. We can stop wearing ourselves out trying to make and force everything to happen as if we were in charge of everything in the world.

Recovery is a spiritual process and step three is when the doors of hope, faith and trust are opened allowing us to once again take a deep breath and feel the serenity: a gift of sobriety. The essence of step three is turning over your will, getting out of the way, and being restored to reality, honesty, balance and peace of mind. For me, this was a true turning point. Taking the positive action of working the steps clearly changed the course of my life. The is a great point in my recovery was when you taught me to say to myself, "I can't. God can. So, I'll let God." You taught me the third step prayer and that helped me Let it Go.

The Third Step Prayer

From the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous page 63

"God, I offer myself to Thee-

To build with me

and to do with me as Thou wilt.

Relieve me of the bondage of self,

that I may better do Thy will.

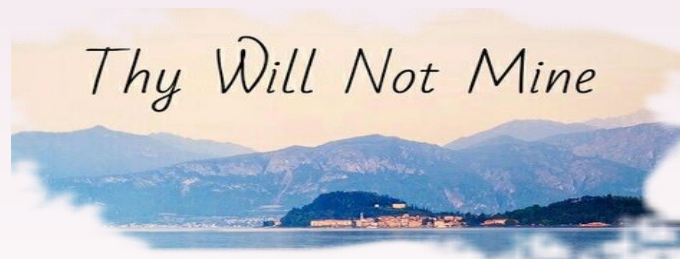
Take away my difficulties,

that victory over them may bear witness

to those I would help of Thy Power,

Thy Love, and Thy Way of life.

May I do Thy will always!"



Continued In Next Month's Journal. . .

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES

SEPTEMBER 2020



WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP

SEPTEMBER

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REAL HAPPY HOUR

SEPTEMBER

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SOBER SAND GNATS

SEPTEMBER

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WE NEED YOUR STORIES!

Tell us about "what it was like, what happened and what it is like now."

In upcoming issues, Nature Coast Journal will publish your brief stories about:

Laughter and Fun in Sobriety, Balance in and out of AA , The Steps ,

Living Your Dreams In Sobriety , AA Humor/ Jokes

Send your stories on any sobriety

related topic!

e-mail: news@ncintergroup.com