

ON THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SALVATION ARMY ADVISORY BOARD

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In August 1865, only one month after the Booths had determined to begin an initiative in East London, the British MP for Nottingham, Samuel Morley, requested a meeting. Upon meeting, William Booth shared the novel and unconventional ideas he and Catherine had to serve the people of this community and increase interest. Morley fully embraced this vision and provided both advice and support, remaining a close advisor until the end of his life. Others soon joined including Henry Reed, who supported the ever-expanding East London Christian Mission.

In 1867, the Booths organize the “East London Mission Council” which consisted of ministers, local philanthropists, publishers, businessmen, and political leaders. The “council” was made up of “members” and “referees.” By 1870, the East London model was replicated into other urban contexts throughout the United Kingdom. This expansion included a short-term experiment in the American city of Cleveland, Ohio in 1873. Shortening the name to “Christian Mission,” this growing initiative required the continued support of advisors to aid these scaling needs. Catherine Booth would regularly speak to the West End of London while traveling far-and-wide throughout the nation, building a broad base of support in each area where the mission landed. She would share the vision and present the need with such convincing logic that one impressed hearer declared, “If I am ever in trouble with the law – don’t get me a lawyer, get me THAT lady!”

As relentless innovators, the Booths continued to iterate their movement, refining methods to discover the *best* way to reach the *largest* number of people in the *shortest* period of time. Motivated by the love of God, *they innovated at the point of human need*, adapting their measures to the times and circumstances in which people lived so that they could effectively reach the forgotten masses. Rooted in the Evangelical Methodist tradition, they combined what John Wesley called “acts of piety” and “acts of mercy” by recruiting an army of volunteers who embraced a practical religion that would one day be dubbed, “Christianity with its sleeves rolled up!” This attracted other advisors like the famed mudracker journalist W.T. Stead (who eventually died on the Titanic) and the “pork philanthropist,” T.A. Denny – whose Irish bacon industry helped finance the dramatic expansion.

Following a serious study of organizations like the innovative railway industry and the restructuring of the British military, the Booths realized that they needed a more effective organizational infrastructure to scale their mission to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its mission. The best way to remain both aligned to their essential purpose while adapting and innovation into relevant expressions was to become a “Salvation Army.” One of the Booth's earliest advisors was Admiral Fishbourne, who oversaw research and experiments for the British Navy. While others would attack this organizational redesign as being “a rope of sand,” Fishbourne would put in writing his defense of these innovations. This change led to an exponential acceleration and expansion in the reach of The Salvation Army. Initiatives began to

spring up in hundreds of locale and quickly to the four corners of the world. Advisors and supporters helped this small regional mission quickly scale into an international organization. By 1890, Sir Garnett Wolsely would declare William and Catherine two of the greatest geniuses of the Victorian Age. They did so with the support of great advisors!

In 1880, The Salvation Army officially came to America following the “advance” pioneer work of a young teenage “Hallelujah Lass” named Eliza Shirley. Quickly, the Army spread throughout the states being led the first year by the first Commissioner, George Scott Railton, who had been the right-hand of the Booths. Following this pioneering year, the American Army expanded and retracted as it struggled through the growth pains of becoming an international movement. Embracing frugal innovation principles, every initiative needed to be sustainable – which required a creative solution. In 1883, the second leader of the Army in America, Commissioner Thomas Moore, pioneered the “Auxiliary League.” While this was the right idea, it only expanded in 1887 when Ballington and Maud Booth enlisted these Auxiliary Leagues to support new social initiatives. The Salvation Army published *The Conqueror* to be shared with members to help share these needs and recruit others to join. This League helped to fund the growing work of the Army in America.

In 1920, the Booth’s daughter, Evangeline Booth – who served as the National Commander of the United States for thirty years – established the local “Advisory Board System.” Dr. Ed McKinley in *Marching to Glory* states that these were:

...designed to enlist local professionals and business and civic leaders to provide the Army’s field officers with advice on local business decisions and useful contacts for fund-raising purposes. Board members were usually willing contributors themselves as well. The advisory board system was well suited to channel community support for The Salvation Army, and it rapidly developed into one of the most important of all Salvation Army support systems.

Within one year there were advisory boards in 1,500 counties in 24 states; Army leaders decided at their first commissioners’ conference in January 1921 that the advisory board “in principle was generally conceded to be good as in practice the institution has proved its value.” By 1925 Colonel Richard Holz was happy to declare that there was ‘an army of not less than 20,000 business and professional men... linked to The Salvation Army’ as advisory board members (p.173).

By the 1960s, parts of the global Salvation Army replicated this innovative business model in other Territories. In 1976, Commissioner William Chamberlain, the 15th American National Commander formed the “National Advisory Council” (renamed “National Advisory Board” in 1982), which would bring to national leadership the same counsel, experience, and financial resources that local advisory boards had provided. By 1983, the first “National Advisory Organization Conference” (N.A.O.C.) took place in St. Louis – an experience that continues into the present.

So from the very beginnings in 1865 in East London to the 21st century, Advisory Boards have been an army of volunteers who have been pivotal partners in realizing our mission, “to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.”