

The National Meeting in Kalamazoo

Our second annual meeting was held in Kalamazoo, Michigan. It was attended by over 50 members from as far away as Seattle, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Boston and West Virginia, though most were from the Midwest region. Fred Newdom and Ann Withorn opened the meeting with a discussion of "The Practice of Progressive Social Work Today". Fred's remarks focused on defining what it means to be a progressive social worker, from the perspective that social work itself can be viewed as a "left" profession. He analyzed some of the difficulties we encounter when living and practicing our political values in the larger society and within the profession, in agency setting and in our practice itself. Ann's talk gave many examples of people she knows who came to social work from a left perspective or became radicalized in the course of their practice. She articulated their daily concerns in their practice and how membership in BCRS helps them determine how they can be more effective in developing their politics in their practice.

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BCRS at NASW

BCRS is sponsoring a session on Thursday November 10 5:30 - 6:30 at the Civic Center.

BCRS member Ruth Messinger, a member of the New York City Council and a leading spokesperson for progressive causes, will present an analysis of the 1988 elections. She will pay particular attention to the challenges and opportunities for the American Left and for advocates of progressive health and social services resulting from the election's outcome.

1989 Membership Renewals

There will be a dues increase for the 1989 year to meet the needs of our

expanding organization. The first objective of the dues increase will be to provide \$50 in seed money to groups of members who want to start a local chapters and need initial start-up money. In addition, organized chapters will begin receiving rebates from the national society based on the number of members signed up with BCRS. This will minimize the amount of energy local groups have to devote to fundraising for their chapter maintenance.

Your dues renewal will insure that you stay informed of this organization's activities and resources. It will enable you to participate in our leadership elections and give you access to hundreds of social and human service workers like yourself who are committed to practicing progressive social work. Please renew your membership!

BCRS WEEK 1989

March 6-13

At the last Steering Committee meeting, a date was chosen for the second annual BCRS Week, which will occur during Social Work Month. Mark your calendars for March 6-13. Local chapters can begin planning now for any kind of activities or forums. It would also be a good time to begin a local BCRS chapter. Sharon Freedberg and Kane Lucas will be coordinating the week for the Steering Committee. Write to them at the BCRS address for assistance or to share ideas.

Kalamazoo (cont.)

On Saturday we divided into working groups to further develop our analyses of left perspectives on issues and what strategies will help advance these perspectives. Working groups were Clinical Practice, Welfare Reform, Homelessness, International, Racism and Child Welfare. On Saturday afternoon the members reconvened and reported on their working groups, articulating practice principles. Plenary summaries begin on Page 6.

Dr. Loretta Williams, Director of Social Responsibility for the Unitarian Universalist Association of Churches and Fellowships of North America, was keynote speaker on Saturday evening. She shared her many experiences in the course of her work which demonstrate how bridges can be built with others to overcome racism and ethnic divisiveness. Following the plenary, we attended "A Lesson from Aloes", a play by Athol Fugard, one of South Africa's leading playwrights. The timing of the play struck a responsive chord following a day of hard analysis and searching for ways to overcome the institutionalization of oppression in our

world, relationships and hearts and minds.

On Sunday morning we amazed ourselves with the passing of our by-laws; for such a boring, "bureaucratic" process, we were impressed with the level of concern expressed in making our by-laws meaningfully reflect our values and aspirations for the BCRS. Constructive suggestions were offered and openly received, controversial items were courteously debated and resolved with consensus. Good work! Later, we frankly evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the meeting, including the wisdom of holding it in Kalamazoo during August and the need to increase our membership base among non-professionals and people of color. Conference evaluation forms were largely positive and many gave useful feedback on how the meeting could have been improved. This feedback is being passed on to future meeting planners.

All in all, the meeting was another benchmark in the development of our organization, revealing our growing pains and achievements, but also our need to continue our steady growth and expansion--because we need this organization for ourselves, each other, and our clients/constituencies.

AID FOR PERSECUTED HUMAN SERVICES WORKERS

The Committee for Chilean Inquiry, of which BCRS is a co-sponsor, has announced a public meeting on Wednesday, November 30 at Hunter College School of Social Work auditorium (129 East 79th Street, New York City). Beginning with a 6 PM reception, the meeting will include discussion of the persecution cludes the following speakers:

Suzanne Dworak-Peck, President of NASW and Vice President for North America of

the International Federation of Social Workers.

Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General.

Cynthia Brown, Associate Director of America's Watch.

Moderator will be Nita Henick, NYC Chapter President of NASW.

Admission -- \$3 (\$1 for limited income)

Information -- Ruth Wilson 212-674-3762

Dinner at NASW

BCRS members who will be attending NASW in Philadelphia have been invited to attend a ten course Chinese dinner (price \$14) arranged by the Philadelphia Chapter. The dinner will follow the BCRS November 10 evening session. To attend, please make reservations by calling Sandy Bauman at (215) 898-5540 or Vicki Ellis at (215) 985-4436.

REMEMBER !!!

**THE TIME TO
RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP IS
NOW**

Mandela Doctorate

from WMU

The BCRS Kalamazoo chapter at Western Michigan University lobbied successfully with the South African Students Organization and the NAACP for Nelson Mandela to receive an honorary doctorate at the WMU commencement last spring.

Anti-Apartheid Solidarity

Dr. Mzobanzi Mboya of the University of Cape Town has initiated a chain of solidarity -- that is, a chain letter --

designed to express support by uni-versity teachers throughout the world for the demand to abolish apartheid in South Africa. We received this letter from Marti Bombyk of Fordham University, who received it from Gudrun Kristinsdottir of the University of Iceland, Reykiavik. We invite you to join the chain by writing a letter with this statement and your name to ten university teachers of your acquaintance, asking them to do the same. Please include on your letter the names and institutional affiliations of all ten recipients and mail a copy to:

Dr. M. Mboya
Department of Education
University of Cape Town
Private Bag
Rondebosh 7700
South Africa.

Members in Print

Mimi Abramovitz has authored two recent articles on welfare reform:

"Social Disservices: Why Welfare Reform is a Sham". The Nation. September 26, 1988.
Myths of Welfare Reform: Welfare, Work and Women". Christianity and Crisis, September 12, 1988.

Leslie Leighninger has published Social Work: Search for Identity. Greenwood Press, 1988. (\$35)

Howard Jacob Karger has published Social Workers in Labor Unions. Greenwood Press, 1988. (\$39.95)

You can order Karger's or Leighninger's book from:

Greenwood Press, Inc.
88 Post Road West
P.O. Box 5007
Westport, CT 06881
(203) 226-3571

Ann Withorn's book, Serving the People is on sale at Columbia Press for \$9.95 (down from \$35). Contact Ann at:

143 Winchester Street
Brookline, MA 02146.

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Outreach

to Students

The Steering Committee wishes to remind members that a major goal and means of building the Society, is to involve students in the BCRS. At a minimum, we suggest that chapters and/or individual members arrange introductory meetings at local schools this year. These meetings would (a) introduce students to Bertha Reynolds and the Society by discussing her, her work and writing, and the activities and points of the call; (b) facilitate a discussion among students regarding what progressive social work means for them in relation to their educations, their placements, their prior work, experience and personal goals; and (c) discuss with them what a campus-based chapter might do.

RESOURCES TO HELP WITH THE MEETING

The National Organization can provide copies of the brochure, the call, the latest newsletter and quotes from Bertha Reynolds. We can also make books available for you to sell. If you want to talk with someone who has been active in the society about the meeting, or even arrange for a speaker (maybe a possibility, depending in the location), please contact the national office address.

The Society needs to reach the upcoming generation of social workers. And we need your help to do this. Think about whether this is something you can do or work with others to accomplish. If you want names of other BCRS members in your area, please contact Michael Dover

at the national post office box.

If you would like to organize a similar meeting in your workplace or union, that's good too. Let us know how we can help.

BCRS Members in Nicaragua

In late July a group of 16 social workers, many of were members of BCRS and the California NASW's Council on Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, spent two weeks in Nicaragua hosted by the Nicaraguan Association of Social Workers (ANTS). Don Cooney and Harvey Williams coordinated the tour. The group visited social and human service centers in Managua and other cities, took part in annual work conferences at the Ministries of Health and Social Services, and joined in the celebration of National Social Workers Day. As part of the Social Workers day celebration, BCRS members Nina Ryan and John Casey were interviewed on Nicaraguan television to discuss the group's peace mission and to compare the organization of social services in the U.S. with those in Nicaragua.

John Casey and Stephen Friedman have prepared a slide show on the trip. If anyone in the NYC areas would like them to come present it to a group, please contact them through the BCRS post office address.

Upcoming Steering Committee Meetings

According to the newly adopted by-laws, "the schedule of meetings of the National Steering Committee shall be made known to the membership. Any Society member in good standing shall have the right to attend meetings of the Steer-

ing Committee though not to vote in its deliberations."

The next Steering Committee Meetings will be held on the weekends of January 14-15 and April 8-9 1989 in New York City. Write us for more info on times, locations and agendas. The main business items for this year will be continuing to work on projects such as the formalization of the organization (e.g. not-for-profit status, postal permit); special projects such as Bertha Reynolds Week, chapter development and membership development, operationalizing the by-laws, and planning for the next conference.

This issue of BCR Reports was prepared by Debra Rosen and Marti Bombyk.

*Presenting a Progressive View at
An Upcoming Conference?*

If you are on the program at a professional conference and are presenting a progressive view on a human service issue, let us know. If the conference date and newsletter production schedules are sufficiently compatible, we can advertise your session to BCRS members who might be attending the conference. Send notices and other newsletter items to:

Debra Rosen
P.O. Box 1406
Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10011

**Nominating and Steering
Committee Elections**

Lee Schore, Ken Grossinger and Arline Prigoff have volunteered to serve on the nominating committee to develop

procedures for the election of steering committee representatives from the local chapters and at-large members. They will be operationalizing the election mandates of the by-laws. The committee reported its initial work to the interim steering committee for discussion and clarification of issues.

The committee is working toward holding elections in 1989. It is important to renew your membership in order to remain in good standing so that you can nominate and vote in our elections.

**Next BCRS National Meeting:
Planning Underway**

We are beginning discussions for another annual meeting for the summer of 1989. Due to a past success record and the "natural homebase" of Smith College, we are initiating planning for holding it in Northampton Massachusetts. We think we might try holding alternate group meetings at Smith and giving two years notice to other regions of the country where the meeting will be held every other year. This will make ongoing planning of meetings more manageable and successful by balancing two important concerns: having an organized base of membership in the locale of the meeting to guarantee sufficient attendance to break even on conference costs and assuring that members throughout the country have the opportunity to attend a meeting in their region. We are hoping that the California chapters will be sufficiently organized by 1990 to hold the fourth annual meeting there. But as with all planning, we must be flexible. So stay tuned, save your pennies, and give us your ideas, enthusiasm, and support to help make next year's meeting as productive, relevant and personally rewarding as can be.

Political Prisoners

The Women's Control Unit at Lexington Prison has been described by the ACLU as "a living tomb" for imprisoned women. Part of the Federal Bureau of Prisons it was designed to hold and torture in conditions of Kafkaesque nightmare imprisoned radical women, using techniques of sensory deprivation and degradation to "rehabilitate" them in 16 subterranean cells. If you would like to support the demand to close and abolish the Women's Control Unit and to express your outrage at its continued existence, write to:

Michael Quinlan
Fed. Bureau of Prisons
320 1st Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Further information about the abolition campaign may be obtained from:

294 Atlantic Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 624-0800

NATIONAL MEETING PLENARIES

SUMMARY REPORT

The following summaries of the work groups do not do justice to the depth of the discussions and the rich contributions of the members. They are offered here to give readers a general sense of the types of ideas that were exchanged. At some point in the near future, we hope these discussions will lead to well developed position papers that can be circulated and debated.

The child welfare group developed a critique of the current child welfare system's assumptions, functions and conse-

quences for families and workers. Arguing that we should, as progressives, more broadly address these issues as the welfare of children and families, we looked to prevention in the form of national family policy to improve the quality of life for all families and children. National family policy includes universal, quality daycare; full employment; paid parental leave of absence, reproductive freedom and national health care. The group worked on developing a vision of "a progressive child welfare" agency.

The group on housing and homelessness examined constraints on developing policies to solve the homelessness crisis; such as the fact that the population has grown rapidly and in the U.S. the housing market's right to profit takes precedence over the people's right to housing. Giving examples of some successful and innovative housing programs, the group developed priorities for housing advocates. Affordable, quality and permanent housing should receive the most attention instead of the expansion and improvement of sheltering programs. There should be more education on alternative financing mechanisms for the construction of housing. The Federal contribution to housing should at a minimum be restored and progressive legislation such as Joe Kennedy's and Barney Frank's bills should be supported.

The racism group concerned itself with the ways the BCRS can differ from other organizations on the issue of racism. Our membership should be well educated on the dynamics and manifestations of institutional and individual racism and the history of racism in the U.S. BCRS members need to shape debates that call attention to racial injustices and work with other coalitions against racism. A good starting place in combating racism would be to analyze the human services industry/workforce, re: job categories, wages, and status.

The international issues group believes that BCRS members should make connections between military spending and the role of U.S. foreign policy with the welfare of U.S. communities and social welfare concerns in the U.S. The group suggested, among many possible activities, that we form linkages with human service organizations in other countries, that each chapter have a fund-raiser (or at least a session each year) to support international concerns, and that we try to get more field placements in other countries for social work students. We also need to be better educated on the realities of the many crises in so-called third world countries and the ways social workers are repressed in some countries.

The group working on clinical issues outlined several principles of progressive practice, such as "the personal is political", the recognition that clinical prevention is the most effective form of intervention. Goals of practice should include empowering clients, building better connections between our theory/ideology and practice, and to have a socially conscious perspective on structural causes of "individual problems". Issues of class,

race and gender should be examined in terms of differential access to resources, services and power. The group envisioned ways of reorganizing agency workplaces to reflect and operationalize to support workers in their work with individuals, families and groups.

The welfare reform group discussed reasons for the liberal collapse around rights and income maintenance and how the public perception of the welfare reform legislation as a "victory" shows how much the Reagan agenda has moved us to the Right.

The welfare reform legislation's dimensions were analyzed in terms of what it means for poor women and for advocates, with implications for a more positive redirecting of the welfare state. The concept of dependency is now de-legitimized; the focus on work reinforces the capitalist agenda.

Special thanks to Vicki Ellis, Sandra Bauman, Joel Blau, Judith Transue, Earl Durham, Don Cooney, Arline Prigoff, Lorraine Gutierrez, Phil Brown, Ann Withorn and Fred Newdom for presenting in and facilitating the work groups.

- Please send me more information about the Society.
- I would like to join the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society. Enclosed are my dues, in the amount checked below.
- Enclosed are my renewal dues for continued membership, in the amount checked below.
 - \$10 Student, unemployed, low income member
 - \$25 Member
 - \$100 Sustaining member
 - \$250 Institutional member

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INSTITUTIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION (optional) _____

TELEPHONE: (Home) _____ (Work) _____

Please make your check payable to *The Bertha Reynolds Society* and return it to:
Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, Columbus Circle Station, P.O. Box 20563, New York, NY 10023

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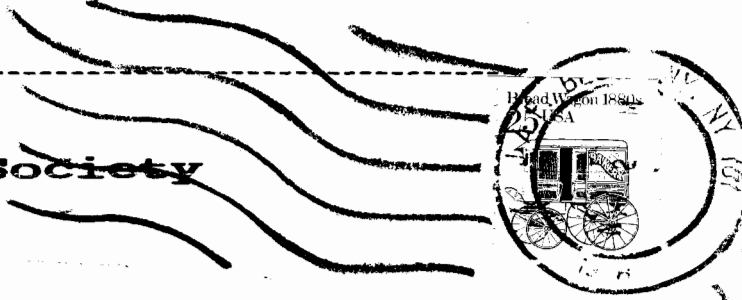
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