

Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

HOLD THE DATE : SUMMER IN KALAMAZOO AUGUST 5-7, 1988

The second annual BCRS National Meeting is scheduled from Friday evening, August 5, to Sunday afternoon, August 7 on the Western Michigan University Campus, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

The topics of the two major plenaries are:

THE PRACTICE OF PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL WORK WITH A FOCUS ON
GENDER, RACE, AND CLASS.

and

SOCIAL WORK AND ANTI-RACIST ACTIVISM.

Workshops will address the development of a Left perspective on:

UNIONS AND EMPLOYMENT

WELFARE REFORM

RACISM

AIDS

WOMEN'S ISSUES

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNES

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

CHILD WELFARE

CLINICAL PRACTICE

HEALTH CARE

and more....

For more information please contact Don Cooney, School of Social Work, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008. Telephone (616) 383-0961.

BERTHA AT CSWE

Bertha Reynold's folks met at the March 6 Council for Social Work Education meeting in Atlanta led by Mimi Abramovitz and Ann Wirthorn. We engaged in some discussion of the state of "welfare reform" debates and the elements of a left critique of this issue.

CHAPTER UPDATES

Kalamazoo Chapter

The Kalamazoo Chapter of BCRS continues to be based on the Western Michigan University campus. In the fall the main focus was on participation in the National Day of Awareness of Poverty in the US, November 17. The featured event was a debate on the Future of Social Welfare between Doug Besharov of the American Enterprise Institute and Don Cooney (BCRS).

For Bertha Reynolds Week (April 12-18), we planned a series of discussions on Welfare Reform especially focusing on homelessness,

employment and income, the handicapped, and issues effecting women and children. Featured event was a guest speaker addressing the Economics of Poverty. Members continue involvement with other social justice organizations including the Rainbow Coalition, the Jackson campaign, as well as South Africa and Central America.

Don Cooney will be sabbatical in Nicaragua next year and Phil Brown will coordinate BCRS activities in Kalamazoo during his absence.

Philadelphia Chapter

Twenty people from the Philadelphia area have responded to the call to join the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society. The chapter had its beginnings in the fall of 1986. We gathered in January 1987 to hear one of our members and a former co-worker of Bertha Reynolds, Max Silverstein, discuss her life and work and its relevance for us today. That inspired another meeting later in the year which focused on "the corruption of the work ethic". We have decided to continue Bertha Capen Reynolds' tradition of Sunday evening discussions and to make this an on-going chapter activity.

In July, twelve people from Philadelphia attended the first national meeting of BCRS at Smith College. As several of us drove back to Philadelphia pondering what form the society might take locally, we were faced with newspaper headlines about the deaths of three children who were under the care of the City's public welfare agency. Long-standing issues involving the public and private economic sectors, the social service union and management, and the profession and political superstructure had suddenly erupted onto the front page. The media focused public attention on the tragedy and its effects on children and families. The chapter received TV coverage when members appeared at a City Council meeting with strike signs (donated by the AFSCME local) saying "Children and Youth in Philadelphia Deserve World-class Services". The chapter has received an excellent response to its petition campaign.

Several BCRS members met to chart a course for the Society. We then invited the community to a meeting called "Protecting Children From Abuse: The Search for Common Ground and Collective Action", where representatives from the State, the City Department of Human Services and the two workers' unions came to speak. With 150 people present, the diversity of representation confirmed the breadth of concern and interest in the community regarding this issue. Many participants felt that it was the first time that the different camps were together in the same room talking with one another. The gathering had its own energy, and a large number volunteered to plan the next steps for what we hope was the beginning of broad coalition which could have an impact on the QUALITY OF SERVICES TO LOCAL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. A second meeting was held in December which drew over eighty people. We have since divided into three working groups, each with its own tasks and strategies toward building the coalition and effecting change. Members of BCRS continue to be involved and provide leadership to the growing

coalition, but it has also taken on a life of its own.

Meanwhile, our Chapter planned an event for the membership here during BCR week in April. You can receive more information about the Philadelphia Chapter from Sandie Bauman (215) 898-5540 or (215) 885-5790.

New York Chapter

NY co-hosted a visit from the head of Nicaraguan social work services who spoke at Hunter College School of Social Work after great difficulties in obtaining a visa for this peaceful, educational visit from the U.S. State Department. A large and enthusiastic audience listened to her discussion of providing social work services under siege and participated in a question and answer session. BCRS New York City held a picnic at the Prospect Park Boathouse in early June.

Sacramento Chapter

Social Workers for Justice (SWJ) is the Sacramento Chapter of the BCRS. The organizers of SWJ envision the local organization in a three fold-role.

1. As a forum for consciousness-raising for ourselves and the community about the relationships between human services and the political, economic and social issues of our time.
2. As a vehicle for social action.
3. As a source of support for progressive social workers.

SWJ was formed in September, 1986 by a group of eleven students and one faculty member at Sacramento State University. In the first year of SWJ's existence its organizers, members and others affiliated held educational forums on US intervention in Nicaragua, the effect of military spending on social service programs, the state of the current mental health system in California (and upcoming legislation designed to radically change this system) and social work in South Africa. We participated in several marches for Peace, Jobs and Justice in San Francisco and produced a quarterly newsletter.

In July of 1987 SWJ sent two of its organizers to Smith College for the first annual BCRS meeting. It was an exciting event which clearly demonstrated the connectedness of this national organization.

SWJ is going through a transition at this time as most of its organizers are finding it difficult to devote as much time and energy to events and activities within the organization. A core group of people continue to be committed to SWJ, however, and we are currently developing strategies for addressing the election of 1988. We are

working on developing relations with local representatives in order to address issues of social concern in Sacramento such as homelessness and inadequate mental health services. We are also developing working relationships with various local groups such as the local chapter of Nuclear Freeze, the Central American Action Committee, the Sacramento Religious Community for Peace, and others. We are excited about this year's opportunities for doing cooperative work in the community as well as the step by step work involved in bringing about change in our society.

Baltimore Chapter

The Baltimore BCRS chapter has continued its organizing efforts. In June a pot-luck dinner was held followed by a guest speaker and discussion of homelessness.

Boston Chapter

Boston's BCR Chapter was almost dormant this fall. We had a very small meeting with a very good discussion led by Ken Schlosser, a local "radical therapist" (whatever that is, he would say). He gave a provocative talk about practice issues, especially the "hidden injuries of the therapist" and how Left therapists deal with the real pains caused by the people with whom they work. On January 29 we held a big Friday night forum "Community Stability and Social Change: The Role of Hispanic Community Organizations in Boston". Miren Uriarte and Luis Prado (two local Latino community activists) discussed such issues as social services and social action (the political contradictions of community agencies); institutional racism and the delivery of services; and how Progressive workers in established agencies can and should work with community agencies. The topic is important in itself and we believe that it will help us to reach out beyond the white social service Left community. Finally, we have just sent out a questionnaire to our mailing list and hope to start a "networking list" where folks can share their interests and make contact with each other.

Smith College to Host Docudrama Based on Letters of BCR

On July 21 at 8:30 P.M., "Somewhere a Door Blew Shut: Letters From Exile", will be presented at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. The presentation will be videotaped for future distribution to interested individuals and chapters.

The National Organizing Committee Report

The National Organizing Committee, composed of representatives from organized local chapters and of various standing committees has met three times since the First Annual Meeting at Smith last summer. We have focused on five areas: development of by-laws and organizational policies to be approved by the membership at the Second Annual Meeting

in August; organizing a BCRS forum at conferences of related social services organizations, e.g. CSWE, NASW, Orthopsychiatry; fostering the development of new local chapters in unorganized areas; developing the book fund and newsletter; and planning and organizing the Second Annual Meeting.

The on-going organizational maintenance activities of the society are being facilitated by monthly meetings of an administrative committee. The committee is charged with implementing the policy decisions of the NOC. For more information about NOC contact Marti Bombyk at (718) 438-2046, 504 East 5th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11218.

Chapters or individual members who have news of interest to the organization at large may send it to:

Debra Rosen	or	Judith Transue
Production Team Coordinator		Editor
PO Box 1406		436 Clark Street
Old Chelsea Station		Morgantown, WV 26505
New York, NY 10011		

If you know of any socially responsible business or organization which might like to place an advertisement in our newsletter please have them contact Debra Rosen at the above address or telephone (212) 924-4901.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Ruth Wilson a New York Chapter BCRS member and secretary of the Committee for Chilean Inquiry, an organization concerned with human rights and social service political prisoners, has announced the recent release of Miriam Dugay, a former social service prisoner in the Philippines and the release (on bail) of Dr. Fanny Pollarola, a Chilean psychiatrist. The Committee is currently organizing a letter writing campaign on behalf of several social workers who are political prisoners in Malaysia. The committee may be reached c/o:

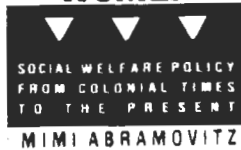
Ruth Wilson
415 Grand Street- Apt. E 1905
New York, NY 10002

BCRS has agreed to be a sponsoring organization of the Committee for Chilean Inquiry.

New York Chapter member Mimi Abramovitz, a faculty member at Hunter College School of Social Work, has announced the publication of her new book entitled Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present (South End Press, 300 Raritan Center Parkway, Edison, NJ). The book applies a gender lens to the Study of

U.S. social welfare policy. It introduces a new concept--the family ethic--to help us understand what happens to women--the majority of social welfare clients. One of the first books to examine social welfare from the perspective of women --both white and women of color--Regulating the Lives of Women develops a feminist theory of the welfare state to analyze history and contemporary events. \$15 (paper), \$35 (cloth) plus \$1.50 for postage and handling from the publisher.

**REGULATING
THE
LIVES
OF
WOMEN**



...of individual ...
...at large may ...

...Team ...
...Box 1408
...Station
...New York, NY 1001

RESPONSE TO THE CALL TO JOIN THE BERTHA CAPEN REYNOLDS SOCIETY

- 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.
 - \$ 5 Student, unemployed, low income member
 - \$ 25 Sustaining member
 - \$10 Member
 - \$100 Lifetime member

NAME (Please print name) _____

ADDRESS _____

INSTITUTIONAL OR 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

The First National Meeting of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

Marti Bombyk, Ph.D.

The weekend of July 10-12 was one of the hottest all summer. The intensity of passionate ideas heated the Smith College School for Social Work as much as the ninety degree temperatures during the first national meeting of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society.

The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society is a new organization of progressive social workers. It has over 600 members in 39 states and 4 countries and has local chapters in several cities. Its largest and most active chapters are in Boston, MA, Sacramento, CA, Philadelphia, PA, and Kalamazoo, MI. The society was conceived at the Bertha Reynolds Centennial Conference held in June 1985 at Smith College. The Conference, organized by the late Jack Kamaiko, was the culmination of a series of events to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Bertha Reynolds' birth (1885-1978) and to restore this pioneer social worker's legacy to its rightful place in the history of social work.

Born in Stoughton, MA, Bertha Capen Reynolds was among the first generation of professionally trained social workers. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Smith College in 1908 and accepted a position as a high school teacher in Atlanta, GA. Her life in the South exposed her to racism and social injustice, particularly in the lives of her students. This first radicalizing experience led to collaboration with black leaders in education, including W.E.B. DuBois. In 1911 she returned to Massachusetts, and in 1914 she received a B.S. degree from the Boston School for Social Workers (which later became the Simmons College School for Social Work.) During the last year of her training and for four additional years she was a caseworker for the Boston Children's Aid Society. In 1918 she participated in the first training pro-



Bertha C. Reynolds

grams in psychiatric social work: a course at Boston Psychopathic Hospital under Elmer E. Southard and Mary C. Jarrett and the first Smith College summer session of the Training School for Psychiatric Social Work (which later became the School for Social Work). Reynolds was the director of social services at Danvers State Hospital from 1919-1923 and a social worker in the Department of Mental Hygiene in Boston from 1923-1925.

From 1925-1938 Reynolds was the Associate Director of Smith's School for Social Work. Her resignation from the School was the result, in large measure, of growing tension around her maverick views. She respected Marxism and believed that social workers should direct their efforts toward eliminating the root causes of social problems affecting their clients' lives. She paid personally for the public and tenacious presentation of her ideas; following her resignation from Smith she taught and consulted in a number of schools and agencies across the country. Growing suspicion of Marxism in

America in the early forties lead to her being isolated from the profession and, after a very satisfying five years as a case supervisor at the National Maritime Union in New York City, she was forced into a pensionless, early retirement in 1948. She maintained a small clinical practice and was an active community volunteer while continuing to study and write. She authored four books in her lifetime — *Between Client and Community* (1934), *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work* (1942), *Social Work and Social Living* (1951), and her autobiography *Uncharted Journey* (1963) — in addition to numerous professional articles, presentations and essays. Her papers are preserved in the social work archive of the Sophia Smith Collection of the College's library.

Not surprisingly, the National Organizing Committee of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society found it an easy decision to hold their first national meeting at Smith College. Co-convened by Ann Withorn and Ken Grossinger, the meeting was planned as a gathering — not a conference. And gather they did. Over 100 members (many from the northeastern U.S., but also from Michigan, West Virginia, Louisiana, and California) attended four plenary sessions and four working groups designed to clarify the purpose of the Society within the social work profession and to initiate dialogue on overlooked, yet compelling issues of the times.

At the Friday night opening session chaired by Ken Grossinger, the Society was welcomed by fellow member Dean Ann Hartman. Dean Hartman's remarks provided an historical grounding for the event, referring to Reynolds' years at Smith. She also underscored that though Reynolds was an advocate of fundamental social change, she was also a highly skilled clinician. Reynolds' life is an example of how micro and macro levels of social work practice can be integrated holistically. The Society was also welcomed by a letter from two of Bertha Reynolds associates, Tommie Walker and Pearl Turk, who worked with Reynolds in the National Maritime Union. Walker and Turk's letter included an inspirational poem written by Reynolds, which was excerpted from *The Years Have Spoken*, a volume of Reynolds'

Marti Bombyk is a founding organizer of the Bertha Reynolds Society. She is also a member of the summer faculty of the Smith College School for Social Work supervising and teaching in the Doctoral Program in the area of social policy and the family. She is an Assistant Professor of Social Service at Fordham University in New York City.

annual Christmas poems that Turk and Walker are editing.

Past NASW President Mary Ann Mahaffey gave the keynote address. As a member of the Detroit City Council and Professor of Social Work at Wayne State University, Mary Ann Mahaffey provided many examples from her years of experience that raise important questions for the profession. Arriving at a consensus on the causes of poverty is among the most pressing. If the profession believes that poverty is an individual's personal problem, rather than a public issue and massive social problem, our interventions in the lives of clients will be superficial. An economic critique of advanced capitalism and the nature of wealth and poverty in this country is necessary for the rejuvenation of a federal welfare state and movement towards a planned economy. Following Mahaffey, Ann Withorn presented the conference agenda. Afterwards, the members relaxed to the music of Marc Miringoff and Regina McCabe, a duet of social workers from New York who sing songs of social concern, humor, and satire.

Saturday morning began with a plenary meeting where representatives of local chapters reported on their activities. Susan Kinoy, a social work activist based at the Villars Foundation in Washington DC then set the tone for the day's work. Discussing the creativity of grassroots projects her foundation has funded, she emphasized the importance of social change at the community level. For example, one group of senior citizens changed the delivery of medical services to the elderly by publishing the names of physicians who do not accept Medicare. She described a rally of the Ku Klux Klan she recently attended in Tennessee where hundreds of white and black counterprotesters lined the march of the Klan, turning their backs in silent protest as the racists passed by. These kinds of creative activities, using as many existing channels as possible, are what is needed to make issues of social justice tangible at the local level.

The members then dispersed into four groups for the remainder of the day. The group topics were: *Worker-Client Relationships*, *Labor and Social Services*, *Defending and Challenging the Welfare State*, and *Developing an International Agenda*.

Joan Dworkin of the Medical Social Work Department at the University of Illinois chaired the session on *Worker-Client Relationships*. Murray Gruber, professor of social work at Loyola University responded to a presentation by Arline Prigoff of San Francisco State University. Prigoff suggested that systems theory offers a useful framework for understanding micro and macro level intervention, that we analyze the context of our work in a class stratified society, and that we analyze the nature of power and domination as it ap-

plies to clinical work. Discussion centered on the political-socioeconomic context in which practice takes place and how the politics of the profession filter into the worker-client relationship. The inter-relatedness of the client's power, the worker's power, and the profession's power was explored in search of ways to develop authentic relationships with clients that can create substantive improvements in their lives.

The session on *Labor and Social Services* was facilitated by Michael A. Dover, a founding organizer of the society and a union-based social worker in New York City. Beth Silverman, director of Human Services Dept. for District 65 of the UAW and Lee Schore, from the Center for Working Life in Oakland, CA, served as resource persons. The working session focused on how social workers need to adopt a more class-conscious understanding of themselves as workers, see their clients as workers, and focus on the workplace as a cause of stress and dysfunction. It is in the workplace where both social workers and clients are exploited with low pay and oppressive working conditions. These power relationships need to be examined to help workers redirect their anger from the individual internalization of stress and malfunction to collective action. The discussion focused on the centrality of work as a mental health issue and the implications of this perspective for the reform of workplaces, unions, and mental health services.

Fred Newdom facilitated the workshop on *Defending and Challenging the Welfare State*. David Gil, director of Brandeis University's Center for Social Change, presented a framework for thinking and acting upon social policy. He proposed a set of reforms and a practice plan that translates into an Economic Bill of Rights: the right to work, the right to income, the right to health care, education, housing and other entitlements that should be universally available. Strict guarantees against racism, sexism, and classism would be a part of this effort for economic justice. Among other publicly held prejudices and stereotypic notions, the idea of dependency was critiqued and the need to demystify its negative connotations was discussed by the group.

Harvey Williams of the University of Pacific, Don Cooney of the School of Social Work of Western Michigan University, and three representatives of Social Workers for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament led the discussions in the session on *Developing An International Agenda*. Williams analyzed the way Nicaragua has managed to transform its society through redistribution, a flexible intervention process where what does not work is simply changed, and the mobilization of people in communities to meet basic needs, e.g. vaccinating children

against polio. Recognizing the problems of limited resources and the continuing war, he discussed how the revolution in Nicaragua was not an event but an ongoing process. Lessons about community development for the U.S. were explored. Cooney's presentation centered on South Africa. He reviewed recent developments and the solidarity movement in the U.S. to help end apartheid. Rose Markham of Western Massachusetts NASW, Henry Hicks from New York City, and Jack Emmer of Philadelphia discussed the activities of the Social Workers for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament in making connections between peace, justice, and human services. The group developed a framework for analysis, visions, strategy, and tactics for linking international issues to domestic ones.

The Society came together in the evening to hear Richard Cloward, Professor of Social Work at Columbia University, discuss his and his collaborator, Frances Fox Piven's research on why democracy does not exist in this country. Large numbers of the nation's citizens are not registered to vote or simply do not vote. The democratic party, which has traditionally attempted to represent the interests of the industrial working class, has not been effective due to shifts in political alignments, particularly in the south. Cloward discussed the problem of achieving democracy, the theoretical rationale for activist campaigns aimed at registering voters, and the practice issues of these campaigns regarding challenging laws and making voter registration an accessible right.

The final session of the Society was Sunday morning, where the working groups reported on their work and future organizational goals were discussed.

After two days of intensive work and discussion, the participants emerged with new ideas, energy, and friends to sustain them in their social work back home. The four members of the resident faculty of the School for Social Work who attended — Gail Perlman, Cathy Reissman, Jerry Sachs and Phebe Sessions — said they were infused with new ideas for teaching. Beyond the conference itself, it is clear that the Bertha Reynolds Society is quickly becoming both a resource and a supportive context for progressive social workers around the nation. Bertha Reynolds would be happy to see her ideas honored in this way. ♣

For more information about the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, write: The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, P.O. Box 20563, Columbus Circle Station, New York, NY 10023.