

# BCR Reports

*Newsletter of the  
Bertha Capen Reynolds Society*

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## Professionalization, Licensure, Private Practice and the Decline of Social Commitment

by Jerry Sachs

It is one of the great ironies that social work's historical and now relatively successful striving for professionalization - particularly as it relates to its "legitimation" through licensure, laws covering third party payments and the growth of private practice - may be amongst the major forces which have begun to undermine its historical mission and values related to social justice and social change. As progressive social workers, it is important to understand the interests and forces which have moved us in this direction. What follows are illustrations, analysis and discussion of some of the regressive trends in social work which have occurred since the major progressive movement in the field during the '60's and early '70's. The ideas which will be presented are not meant to be comprehensive or complete, but rather they are intended to open discussion and debate on the dangers that full professionalization, licensure and private practice pose to social work's social commitments.

- 1) During the late '60's and early '70's, the Social Welfare Worker's Movement, a forerunner of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, developed a platform and organization which included paraprofessional social welfare workers at all levels of education and experience. The bywords were "inclusion" and "connection" to our fellow workers, not "exclusivity" and "monopoly of practice" which is inherent in

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## Response: Decline of Social Commitment

by Kenneth J. Herrmann, Jr.

Social work is rooted in its commitment to assist persons oppressed, victimized, disenfranchised, and hopeless. The clients of our services deserve to receive the best available results of our many years of the development of knowledge, skills and values. These clients' needs are still manifested by personal, interpersonal and social factors which they perceive as beyond their control. Advocates, clinicians, community organizers and others within our profession have worked toward the amelioration of these factors and the improvement of the lives of clients. Social workers have historically been accountable to their clients for the quality of this service. Agencies were formed to provide a vehicle for services. **However, the ultimate allegiance must be to clients and not organizations. Licensure was begun not as a means to providing professional status but rather as a means to the end of social workers' accountability to clients. Rather than a regressive trend, licensure is a logical step toward this public accountability, a means to enforce standards of practice quality and a protection for clients against exploitation and the misuse of a social worker's actual or perceived authority and power. My response to the Sachs article addresses his four major points as follows:**

- 1) The development of the Society of Clinical Social Workers was in response to what was felt by clinicians as neglect of their speciality by the NASW, the

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## UPDATE ON NASW/CWA UNION DISPUTE

Recently CWA, the union which represents NASW's national staff, took a strike vote. Despite many bargaining sessions no final agreement on a new contract has been reached. In an August memo to all national staff, **NASW Executive Director Mark Battle** reminded staff of the consequences of a strike - i.e., no pay and the suspension of NASW benefits. The memo went on to state that should there be a strike, NASW intends to continue to conduct business as usual and that security guards would be utilized to achieve this end. Battle also reminds workers that strikers can be permanently replaced and that non-union workers honoring a picket line may meet the same fate. **Marti Bombyk** (representing BCRS) formally protested this NASW memorandum in an October letter to Battle, pointing out that his threat to replace CWA workers exercising their rights contrasts sharply with the goals and principles of social work. Bombyk also observed that Battle's message "reflects a shift in NASW's long-standing opposition to laws and policies which prohibit strikes by employees, as specifically articulated in its Standards for Personnel Practices.

### **BERTHA REYNOLDS FELLOWSHIP AVAILABLE**

The Bertha Reynolds Fellowship Program for Minority Scholars in Social Work has been established by the Smith College School for Social Work. The Program provides a dissertation year fellowship to an American minority student committed to a career in teaching and research. In addition to financial support, the program provides mentoring and guidance in preparing for an academic career in Social Work education.

While in residence at Smith College, the Fellow is expected to fulfill a series of commitments constituting approximately one-third of the twelve month fellowship year. The Fellow's duties may include, but are not limited to, these and/or fieldwork advising, classroom teaching or community project advising. A stipend, office space, computer support and library privileges are provided during the fellowship.

***Applicants must be U.S. citizens and have completed all of the requirements for the doctorate except for the dissertation.*** Preference will be given to candidates with a clinical social work background.

Date of Fellowship: September 1, 1990 - August 31, 1991 (*one year, non-renewable*)

• Stipend Amount: \$24,000

**Application Deadline: March 30, 1990**

For further information and application materials contact:

Joyce E. Everett, Ph.D.,  
Chair Bertha Reynolds Fellowship  
Advisory Committee,  
Smith College School for  
Social Work,  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
(413) 585-7950.

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Please Mail All Contributions for the Next BCR Reports to:

Barbara Kasper, Editor  
Social Work Department  
Faculty Office Building  
SUNY College at Brockport  
Brockport, NY 14420

Letters to the editor, essays, news items, BCRS Chapter activities, cartoons, etc., all welcome!

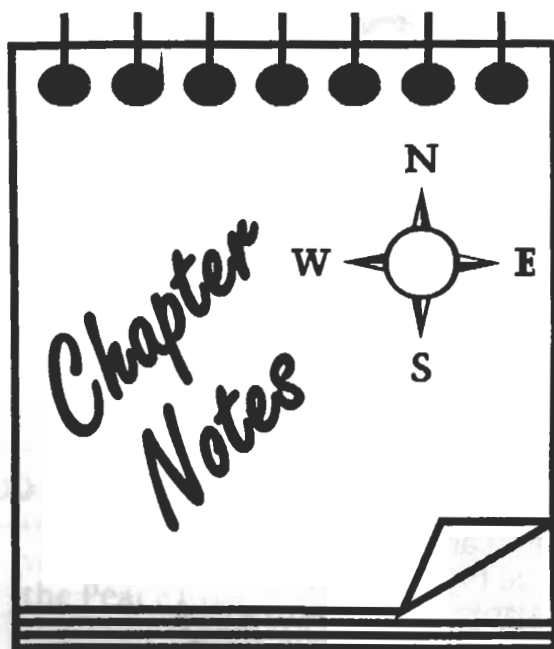
**New York City:** This chapter has established a "stable and open" Steering Committee. In addition to an inspirational rally at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Chapter participation in the Reverse Freedom Caravan in June included 21 members submitting over 700 voter registration cards from street tables in anticipation of the Fall mayoral election in the City.

Two Fall forums drew large audiences. A forum on health care activism, led by Judy Wessier, created a lively debate among the 60+ participants. A forum on professional survival and organizational change, led by Beth Silverman and Barbara Simon, introduced the many students present in the audience to progressive approaches to this issue in social work practice.

The spring calendar now being planned will include "Learning from Act Up" at the Assembly Hall of the Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center at 208 West 13th Street on February 7th. This will be a discussion of the Left's use of civil disobedience in response to restricted access to health care, housing and civil liberties. Other forums are planned on feminist therapy and on social work's response to the abortion issue.

**Boston:** Boston Bertha is still trying to re-energize itself as a chapter. During the Fall many members were very active in the successful election of local BCRS member Sandy Felder for the presidency of SEIU 509, the state social service workers union. Many people have also been very involved in helping the Tax Equity Alliance of Massachusetts in its successful drive to put a fair tax initiative on the 1990 ballot and/or have been active in demonstrating against dramatic state cutbacks. And almost all human service workers are experiencing increased job stress and demands - as well as layoffs - due to the state budget crisis.

We all wish the BCRS could be more of an organized presence within the state struggles to fight cuts, build an equitable tax



base, and create a movement for a stronger social state, but the way to accomplish this is not yet clear.

Some members did meet and plan to discuss the politics of private practice, but the attendance was too sparse to hold a discussion. We are planning a social occasion for December with the goal of helping people re-connect and find ways to support each other.

**Kalamazoo:** Last year, Kalamazoo's BCRS chapter held a fund raising concert to benefit women and children in Nicaragua. At that time we raised \$600. Of this money raised, \$300 went to buying supplies for a child care center and \$300 went to shipment costs for sending medical supplies.

Current project consist of: recruiting tutors who work with Black children in Kalamazoo's north side neighborhood, working with the Rainbow Coalition to get out voters (who are sympathetic to the Rainbow Coalition's mission) to vote in the recent city commissioner election. We also sponsored a rally on campus for Social Justice and Human Rights at home and abroad.

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# BCRS BOOK ORDER FORM

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE/PROV \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
<b>Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work</b> Reynolds stresses the need for the professional social worker to be educated as a whole person. She describes the stages of conscious intelligence in the process of learning and relates them to the motivation for learning. Softbound.		\$11.00	
<b>Social Work &amp; Social Living</b> The practice and philosophy of social work are critically examined. Reynolds argues, based upon her experience with labor unions, that the orientation of social agencies toward psychological dynamics makes it difficult for clients to seek help. Softbound.		\$ 7.00	
<b>Between Client &amp; Community</b> Caseworkers are often caught between the conflicting needs of their clients and the community, especially in times of rapid change. Reynolds examines how these conflicting claims can be resolved. Softbound.		\$ 7.00	
<b>Uncharted Journey</b> Reynolds' inspirational autobiography dedicated to "young social workers who are facing realities and shaping our profession with courage and creativity". Covers the development of her practice philosophy and the course of her career from 1914-1964. Softbound.		\$10.00	
<b>The Years Have Spoken</b> A collection of annual greetings sent by Reynolds and her friends from 1935-1973. The collection includes her annual original verse and a narrative describing the condition of the world that year and how she had been effected by these events. Makes an excellent holiday or graduation gift. Softbound.		\$ 6.50	

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professionalization and licensure. The organization was a progressive force which had at least a marginal influence on moving NASW and CSWE slightly to the left. In reaction to this movement the now very powerful and relatively right-wing Society of Clinical Social Work was organized. The organizing literature of the SCSW raised concerns about the progressive trends in the field, especially the use of community paraprofessionals and the need for the field to work at the core of social work education and practice. The power and influence of the Society of Clinical Social Work has had great impact on NASW. Specifically, NASW has protected itself during the late '70's and throughout the '80's by moving to the right and adopting positions regarding licensure, third party payments and setting up committees on private practice which parallel those of the SCSW.

2) It is worth noting that one meaning of profession is "an avowal whether true or pretended." It is relevant for progressive social workers to ask whether the NASW code of ethics is true to their values or has whether it has become a pretense. For example, the progressive 1967 version of the code of ethics adopted by the delegate assembly begins with: "I regard as my primary obligation the welfare of the individual or group served, which includes action for improving social condition." In 1980, the code was changed and it now begins with: "The social worker's conduct and comportment as a social worker ." it then moves on to the worker's ethical responsibility to clients - Section II - which includes a section on fees. Finally, in Section VI, the last section, the next to last entry of the code states that "the social worker should advocate changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions and to promote social justice." Priorities have clearly changed.

- 3) Licensure is private property which in private practice is traded on for private benefit. The poor are systematically excluded from services offered by private practitioners. Private practitioners are usually unwilling (and in most cases unable) to offer the comprehensive and flexible services which are delivered by at least some agencies. Agencies are also more apt to provide advocacy services.

- 4) Professionalization and licensure have brought a new breed of students into the field. During the sixties, social work attracted applicants from VISTA, the Peace Corps and activists from both the civil rights and peace movements. These students saw social work as a progressive occupation through which they could live their ideals. Currently, many applicants choose social work in order to get a quick license to open a private practice. All too often, social work is chosen to avoid the lengthy time it takes to get a doctorate in clinical psychology or because the prospective student was not accepted into a clinical psychology program. Many do not call themselves social workers but rather identify themselves as therapists or psychotherapists. They want "into the system" versus systems change.

As a progressive organization, The BCRS needs to be aware of an mobilize against the regressive aspects of professionalization, licensure and private practice. This will not be easy in a generation of workers who view themselves as "entitled" rather than working for entitlements. The good fight of social work is for socialized medicine and mental health services which permits workers to advocate for clients from case to cause in the areas of jobs, housing, education, nutrition and other human needs. Some time ago, Helen Perlman called on us to put the "social" back in social work. It appears now that it is time to put the "worker" back in social worker.

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Hermann (Continued from Page 1)

need to ensure knowledge and skill development after the MSW and the protection of clients by requiring credentialed membership standards. Members of the SCSW generally remained with the NASW. Many maintained their political agenda in addition to their clinical practice. Most continued to work in agencies. Many served clients through their private practices. This enabled additional contact with clients through the practice of social casework both within and outside of agencies. There is no evidence that the NASW's recent efforts in promoting clinical practice are at the expense of other fields of service or other specializations or its recognition of the richness and importance of generalist practice.

- 2) The textbooks used to teach BSW and MSW students consistently ascribe to the primary value of practice as being the welfare of clients and client systems. The SCSW and the NASW adhere strongly to this principle. The changes in the 1980 Code of Ethics do not diminish this historical dictate. This Code clearly outlines ethical standards of conduct from conduct and comportment, responsibility to clients, responsibility to colleagues, responsibility to employers, responsibility to the profession and responsibility to society. All of these are priorities. The Code makes this clear: one cannot honor one section of the code without integrating the others. The Preamble clearly states: "This code is based on the fundamental values of the social work profession that include the worth, dignity and uniqueness of all persons as well as their rights and opportunities." It is not a set of rules but rather a statement of principles. It strengthens the commitment to our historical principles reflected in the 1967 version. Priorities have not changed.
- 3) Licensure now exists in most states. A public body administers licensure in each state. This public body is charged not with representing social work or

protecting social work, but rather with representing and protecting social work's clients. Some states license clinicians as a speciality. Most do not. Most license generalists at the MSW and/or BSW levels of practice. The clients of all social workers who are licensed are protected not merely by the "good will" of social work or by the social worker's professional ethics but also by the support of government. This is public regulation of a public profession to protect the public. Licensing requires certain knowledge, identified skills, adherence to professional values and standards of behavior which reduce the risk to clients by unethical, destructive and damaging practice. Social workers who are licensed are required to prove their knowledge of specialized and generalists methods, social policy cultural diversity, human behavior and the values and ethics of social work. They are then required to use this knowledge in the best interest of their clients.

Most mental health professionals are social workers. Private practice is not new. Social workers work for clients whether or not they are in agencies. The private practitioner is able to self-direct practice without the restrictions placed by the bureaucracies of agencies. When licensed, however, they are still accountable to clients and the public - not agency regulations. They are able to practice advocacy for clients free from the threat of administrative interpretations.

- 4) Licensure is a response to the need to protect the public - not a cause of the growth of the number of social workers who retreat from systems change. It is not, however, a given that clinicians face and either/or focus to practice. One may see clients privately as an aspect of agency practice and within the broader context of social work's mission to effect systems change. Most private practitioners are also agency employees. Many are involved in cause advocacy, policy reform and other aspects

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# NICARAGUA: SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

by Agnes Zellin and Paul Tick

*This past May*, four human service workers visited Nicaragua to assess the social service needs of the country. We were invited by the Nicaragua Institute for Social Welfare and Social Security (INSBBI). The Director of INSBBI, Marcia Ramirez, hoped that by developing relations between human service workers in the U.S. and Nicaragua, some Nicaraguan workers could come to the U.S. and receive desperately needed training.

During our two-week trip we visited schools, hospitals, day care centers, community service organizations and rehabilitation centers. We visited the capital city, surrounding cities, country towns and the Atlantic Coast. There, the most devastating effects of the 1988 hurricane are still a part of everyday life.

Everywhere we traveled we witnessed the incredible efforts of the country's sixty trained social workers to overcome enormous social problems. With so few trained social workers and scarce resources, the slogan and practice of "social problems -- community solutions" was developed. It was recognized that the most significant problems are social ones and it takes the efforts of everyone together; professionals, working people, parents and children to solve the nation's physical, emotional; and economic problems. Wherever we went, whole communities were involved.

Before 1979, there were virtually no social services available to the people of Nicaragua. In 1979, after the success of the revolution, the Ministry of Social Welfare was created and in 1982 it merged with the

Institute of Social Security. The present organization seeks to ensure that the population is socially secure and stable. However, the goal is distant. Ten years of the U.S.-backed Contra war has left 26,000 people killed, 250,000 displaced, 6,000 young people disabled and thousands orphaned. To complicate matters, last October's hurricane Joan ripped through 80% of Nicaragua, leaving 10% of the population homeless, destroying the crops of hundreds of thousands of people and killing 170. The war and hurricane have contributed to a serious collapse of the Nicaraguan economy.

**Everywhere we traveled we witnessed the incredible efforts of the country's sixty trained social workers to overcome enormous social problems.**

The reality of repairing Nicaraguan lives is delicately and tenuously balanced between hope and

despair. The Vice Minister of INSBBI, Dr. Ricardo Chavarria, explained: "Our people have been castigated over and over and this makes it very difficult to continue. Since the revolution, we have emerged as a people of great solidarity, friendship, and patriotism. These are the best values in life but at the same time we face major social problems. They are not complex but they are deeply felt -- hunger, isolation, poverty."

However, the vision of service workers prevails -- it is a vision of the strength and intelligence of the Nicaraguan people. One worker explained: "the social worker is a worker of the people. We do not resolve the problems for a community. We work with the community and the community decides how it will solve its own problems. We don't want our experienced workers to stay inside our institutions. We must work with the people as community workers." INSBBI

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-**Ruth Messinger**, an 11-year member of the New York City Council, was elected in November to succeed David Dinkins as Manhattan Borough President.

-**Barbara Kasper** from the SUNY College at Brockport, New York, wrote an article, "Women and AIDS: A Psycho-Social Perspective" published in the Winter, 1989 edition of **AFFILIA: Journal of Women and Social Work**.

-**Ann Hartman** from Smith College has become the new Editor-in-Chief of **Social Work**, the Journal of the NASW. In the September 1989 issue she wrote an editorial, "Still Between Client and Community" which mentions Bertha Reynolds and her beliefs.

-Also in the September 1989 issue of **Social Work**, **David Wagner**, University of Southern Maine, published an article, "Fate of Idealism in Social Work: Alternative Experiences of Professional Careers."

-**Judith Lacerte**, from the Eastern Washington University School of Social Work, was the key organizer of a conference: "Women, Power and Money: A Guide to Socially Responsible Investing" on October 21, 1989 in Spokane, Washington.

**Philip Lichtenberg**, Professor at the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research at Bryn Mawr College, wrote a book, **Getting Even: The Equalizing Law of Relationship**, published by University of America, Inc.

-**Paul Tick, Kathryn Shea, and Agnes Zellin** from the Albany, New York area, worked on a social workers exchange project which was co-sponsored by BCRS. The Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security and Social Welfare requested assistance in training social welfare personnel in their country. A small group of social workers from the capital district and New York City travelled to Nicaragua in April, 1989 to conduct a needs assessment. (See article on Page 4)

-**Jill Friedman** from Berkeley, California, helped to organize a reunion picnic in June 1989 to commemorate the Mississippi Summer and the murders of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner.

-**Mario D'Angeli**, Professor of Social Welfare, San Francisco State University, participated in a public debate entitled: "E Pluribus Unum: Does Mr. Madison's Constitution Require Mr. Madison's Avenue?" in May 1989 at Glendale Community College.

## Catalyst Becomes Journal of Progressive Human Services

The **Journal of Progressive Human Services** is the only journal dealing with social problems and human services from the progressive perspective. The journal intends to stimulate debate about the major social issues and contribute to the development of the analytic tools needed for building a society based on equality and justice for all. This is the only journal in the U.S. that uses a progressive framework to examine personal, professional and political issues in the human services. The new **Journal of Progressive Human Services** will feature critiques of leading social issues, insights about direct practice and reports on innovative human services in various countries. Contributors will also examine oppressed and vulnerable groups, struggles by workers and clients on the job and in the community, dilemmas of private practice in a conservative period and strategies for ending racism, sexism, heterosexism against the disabled and the psychologically distressed.



## **Summary Of Speech By Bernie Saunders - From The Plenary Session, BCRS Conference At Smith College, July 1989**

This year's conference was attended by over 150 registered participants; the lunch room held over 200 and it was filled to capacity at the Saturday lunch. We are learning how to hold a progressive social work conference. Progressive social workers are learning about us. Space does not permit a summary of all the workgroups. One day we'll have a conference that publishes proceedings. But until then....

Bernie Saunders, former mayor of Burlington, Vermont was the first speaker in the opening plenary session of the conference. He began his speech with a description of the ways in which we we, the people in the "land of the free," are not really free. He reminded us how half of the eligible U.S. citizens do not vote, and the majority of non-voters are poor. The barriers to voter registration make voting difficult for poor people. Furthermore, they don't see a reason for voting.

Seventy-nine percent of the incumbent U.S. Congressional representatives were re-elected, some while under indictments. The turnover in the Politburo in the Soviet Union is greater now than in the U.S. Congress. Are they doing such a good job, or is it that the rich incumbents with PAC money can stay in their jobs indefinitely? One third of the members of the U.S. Senate are millionaires. The two majority parties in the U.S. are increasingly becoming indistinguishable

One percent of the U.S. population owns one-half of this nation's wealth. The last ten years have seen a doubling of the number of billionaires while the standard of living of ordinary working people is dramatically declining, especially for young workers. There is 25% less purchasing power than ten years ago.

Fifteen percent of U.S. citizens have no health care insurance. The cost of health

care is estimated to triple between now and the year 2,000. The elderly are paying one-half the cost of their health care out of their own pockets despite Medicare. Doctors, pharmacies, and insurance companies are doing very well. The U.S. is one of two countries in the industrialized world without national health care insurance; the other country is South Africa.

Thirty percent of U.S. children are dropping out of high school. Ten to twenty-five percent of Americans are functionally illiterate.

Ordinary people are frustrated and disgusted and want change. In 1981 in Burlington, Vermont it began with just three people. And later it became city government. Politics is not just asking for more....more shelters for the homeless, more day care. Politics is about power. Do we want it? Or do we let them keep it? We can do better than the people who own the U.S. today. Do we have the courage to move beyond begging with a tin cup? We must go out and raise the right issues and present a real alternative when people who are hurting badly want to see real change; we have to have the courage to go out and tell it like it is.

We must tell people why Nicaragua is not an accident. And who controls the media and what its function really is all about. And why we have people sleeping on the streets. And why certain things are happening in the Third World, while the rich are continuing to get tax breaks.

The Democratic Party requires so much compromise that it is left with nothing of substance. Losing office is a place to begin. The first time Saunders ran for office he received 2% of the vote. If we had people running for office all over, the ruling class would get scared and move to the left. Every time. Until then the assumption is that we are here and we have no support. We must

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Next semester we will be bringing in Nancy Amedai to speak about the connection between drugs and poverty, and organizing graduate student social workers who are researching and presenting data concerning causes and possible solutions to the present drug problem in Kalamazoo.

### **Peoples's Conference Sponsored By New York State Campaign For A People's Budget**

This conference focused on organizing a multi-issue education and lobbying campaign to tell elected officials that we want a human budget and a progressive tax system.

Workshops were held on a variety of issues including: education, racial justice, criminal justice, health and AIDS, housing, welfare rights, and others. The conference was held at Hunter College, 68th and Lexington, New York City. For more information call: Shakoor Aljuwani (212) 289-4900 or Denise Pedro (718) 447-8521.

### **FACULTY ON WHEELS PROJECT**

The BCRS would like to re-new its "Faculty on Wheels" project. This involved coordinating a list of people who would be willing to speak to groups of students, faculty and workers about issues concerning progressive social work practice and social welfare today. If you have an area of expertise that you would be willing to share, please send your name, topic, and geographic locale to:

Sharon Freedberg  
Lehman College - CUNY  
Dept. of Sociology and  
Social Work  
Bronx, New York 10468

212-960-8840

## **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

As the year draws to a close, 535 members belong to the Society in 37 states of the U.S., four provinces of Canada, France, England, Sweden and the Phillipines.

Membership continues to grow as a result of the mailing done to the membership of C.S.W.E. and other social workers as part of the organizing for the Housing Now! rally. Over 50 members have joined already as a result of this outreach, and over half have taken advantage of the

discount subscription available to members wishing to receive the Journal of the Progressive Human Services.

This was the first major outreach mailing in some time, and the results show that, especially in the areas of the country outside the major cities, progressive social workers and human service workers feel the need for a national network.

Based upon the discussion at the last Steering Committee meeting, it is clear we need to reach out more to students and involve more African-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Latino and other national minority social workers in the organization. Members needing brochures to do outreach can receive them in bulk by writing the Society. Please specify how many you need for your class, workplace or for a mailing to persons you feel would be interested.

If you have any questions about your membership status please contact Michael Dover at (215) 295-3972

**SAVE THE DATE!!! JULY 6 AND 7, 1990  
FOR THE ANNUAL BCRS CONFERENCE  
AT SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY**

- of social justice. MSW and BSW social work curricula all demand an emphasis beyond the clinician's office. There is no doubt that some social workers do neglect this mission. However, exceptions are not a call to condemn the public's right to quality services from social workers as well as the use of a wide-variety of practice arenas.

Unlicensed social workers are regulated by themselves and/or their professional organization. However, accountability to clients is necessary. Licensing is a progressive move towards affording clients this control. The fear of client accountability and the dictating of where a social worker should and should not practice is elitist. It reflects a dangerous perspective of social work which weakens efforts to improve the quality of services as well as efforts to keep the social in social work. Our concern should be the welfare of clients and client systems, not the freedom to provide sloppy services stemming from an unfounded fear of accountability to the clients we serve.

### BCRS SPONSORS:

BCRS was one of the Cooperating Groups which supported a program on Human Rights at Home and Abroad on November 16, 1989 at the Hunter College School of Social Work. The event was organized by the Committee for Chilean Inquiry. Speakers included: Miriam Friedlander, New York City Council member; Joshua Rubenstein, Northeast Regional Director of Amnesty International and a representative from the Chilean Human Rights Commission.

### **WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

**A**t the Northhampton conference in July several folks raised the question about whether there is a problem with our name. Some of the issues raised were:

- 1. It creates the immediate problem of explaining who Bertha Reynolds was, rather than what the Society is politically.
- 2. It may be exclusionary, so that people who do not know who Bertha Reynolds was immediately feel "out" of the inner circle, or those who are not MSW social workers feel that the organization is not for them.
- 3. Outreach to Afro-American and Latino constituencies especially is not aided by naming ourselves after a relatively unknown white woman.
- 4. It just does not allow us to define ourselves politically without a lot of extra conversation. On the other hand, many people feel that the direct identification with Bertha Reynolds is important for historical continuity and identification with a tradition of left activism within social welfare. Also, as a new organization just beginning to build a name for itself, is this the time for a change? Maybe if we were doing our job of outreach and organizing the name would not be a problem.

The Steering Committee has had a preliminary discussion of these issues and would like to hear from members who have ideas about the issue. Should we consider an expansion of our name? A new name? Another additional acronym for BCRS? Please write us with your ideas about the topic.

### **New Environmental Documentary Available**

A documentary about the Savannah River Plant, "Building Bombs," has received favorable reviews throughout the South. This powerful film, documenting the environmental hazards of nuclear weapons plants, is available for screenings to teachers and activist groups. Contact Edward McNally, Publicity Coordinator, Box 5202, Station E, Atlanta, GA 30307 -- 404-627-2467.

workers provide training to community volunteers but the community as a whole chooses which problems need to be tackled. "People are the magic key to solving social problems. Everyone is involved -- students, peasants, teachers, even the children. And we don't just focus on social problems. We also see the importance of preserving community recreation, celebration and well-being. Everyone takes ownership of a project."

The Nicaraguans are committed to popular participation in social services. They become educated and empowered as they solve community problems. However, they are technically inexperienced, and acutely aware of their lack of educational, material and financial resources. They persevere but also seek outside support. This is where the Social Workers Exchange Project seems to make a difference.

The next stage of our project is to host three Nicaraguan social workers coming to Albany, New York and New York City in December. They will observe a variety of social work settings -- centers for the disabled, veteran's centers, domestic violence shelters, foster care agencies, hospitals, etc. They will learn about the strengths and weaknesses of our social service system. We plan to provide them with useful practical information and training workshops. However, perhaps the most valuable aspects of the project will be the strengthening of our commitment to work together and to learn together, to bring more understanding between our countries for the social well-being of us all.

If you would like to contribute to this project or travel as a social worker to Nicaragua, please contact Agnes Zellin in Albany at (518) 463-2348 or (518) 489-2893 (eves.). The Social Workers Exchange Program is a project of the Northeast Division of NASW, the Sisters of Charity of Halifax,

Nova Scotia, and the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society.

### **BCRS PROTESTS APARTHEID REFLECTED IN WELFARE SERVICES DELIVERY**

**Don Cooney**, BCRS member from Western Michigan University, authored a letter dated November 20, 1989, which was directed to Dr. Willie Van Niekerk, the Minister of Health and Population Development in South Africa. Representing the Society, Mr. Cooney focused on the fact that South Africa practices racial differentiation in the welfare field which deleteriously effects the delivery of social services. This racial differentiation is extremely costly due to the duplication, fragmentation, and bureaucratization of service delivery. The letter goes on to point out: "The majority of the South African population (which is Black) has no political rights and therefore no access to decision-making which will influence the flow of welfare resources in their direction. And lastly, the cost of apartheid in general is escalating daily and this is one of the reasons why the government is shelving its responsibility onto the individual and the community to provide for themselves in times of need."

This letter raised the issue that 95% of all Black households as compared to 11% of all white households earned less than 3,000 Rands per year in 1980. The child welfare budget for African children is 4.1% in comparison with 35% for white children. Whites (who comprise 18% of the total population) receive eight times more resources than Africans (who make up 69% of the population).

"Boy, they were big on crematoriums, weren't they?" - *Comment during his tour of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz in September 1987.*

From: **The Wit and Wisdom of George Bush**, by Brady and Solomon, 1989, St. Martin's Press . . .

stay independent of the Democratic Party. Look at the example of the Left in Canada, the Left in Europe. The majority consensus in Canada is more liberal than the U.S. Democratic Party.

We have to hold our constituency up and bring it to the polls. We have the majority. How do we bring single issues together, people together? Our parents told us "don't sign the petition, you'll get in trouble!" But if one of us signs, five of us will sign. And it's less frightening. And we can start using words like "democratic socialism." Socialism at first was a big deal. But not anymore in Vermont, only out-of-state. Vermont is optimistic about its future.

### N.A.B.S.W. CONFERENCE APRIL 24-28 IN LOS ANGELES

The Society plans to place a half-page ad in the Conference booklet for the 21st Annual Conference of the National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc. in Los Angeles April 24-28, 1990. Also, plans are being considered to reserve exhibit space. Assistance is needed from our many members in the Los Angeles area to help staff the table. If you live in Los Angeles and could help, please contact Michael Dover, Membership Secretary at (215) 295-3972. Also, if you are planning to attend the conference, Mike would appreciate your letting him know if you would be able to coordinate with those staffing a table with BCRS-related literature, books, etc.

### **Social Workers Organize For Housing NOW!**

The Bertha Reynolds Society made a commitment at its annual conference in July to get actively involved in the mobilization for the Housing Now! march held on October 7, 1989 in Washington, D.C. BCRS members felt our participation was important for several reasons:

- 1. Our clients are increasingly affected by the lack of affordable housing. Many are homeless.

- 2. As the HUD scandals have unfolded it has become shockingly clear that much of the money for housing was not cut by the Reagan administration was stolen by large developers.

- 3. As progressives, we see decent housing as a basic right for all people in this country.

A committee was formed to organize our participation in Housing Now!. We contacted the Housing Now! coalition and became an official national sponsor of the action. A budget was created for outreach, with the Society deciding to finance the bulk of the costs because the mailing was also a membership outreach mailing. A mailing was done to almost 5,000 social workers. Although the mailing was late due to the slow non-profit postal permit method used and problems with the mailing service during Labor Day, nearly 25 persons pledged up to \$50 to support the event and a check was sent to Housing Now! for \$500 to help pay off part of the estimated \$20,000 debt incurred for organizing expenses.

A banner was made by Washington, D.C. area members Dorothy Van Soest and Susan Kinoy, who was also co-chair of the Housing Now! Committee along with Judith Transue of West Virginia. The banner was carried by Dorothy and 20 students from the Catholic School of Social Services, who march along with a contingent from the National Association of Social Workers.

Many others who did not arrive in time to march with the banner mobilized to attend the march and came with clients and co-workers. According to the report prepared by Judith Transue for a steering committee meeting of BCRS, "It seems important for BCRS to continue to participate actively in national mobilizations of this kind or issues which affect our clients or other progressive issues. It is in keeping with the principles we share, as active participants in helping to form a better society, and it draws new people to us."

*(Continued on Page 14)*

Accordingly, a committee has been formed - informally called the "action faction" - to help coordinate and mobilize for further actions and emergency appeals as we continue to learn how to utilize our membership's experience and our organizational capacity to more fully involve social workers in social action and broader coalitions.

If you are interested in contributing to the work of this committee, phone Judith Transue at (304) 291-3600 or Marilyn Moch at (212) 316-3150. The first activity of this committee was to put out the emergency appeal members should have already received on El Salvador, with information supplied by members Ruth Wilson, Susan Kinoy and Ken Walters.

### JULIE REISKIN DETAINED AFTER CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATED

By Michael Dover

Julie Reiskin of Connecticut, a BCRS member who attended the summer 1989 conference at Smith, was featured in an article in **The Guardian** after being detained by police for exercising her civil rights. According to the Guardian, Julie and a friend, both in wheelchairs, went to the movies and sat in the aisle about three-fourths of the way down towards the screen, as was their normal practice.

However, they were soon told by an employee that they would have to get their wheelchairs out of the theater. When they refused, an assistant manager claimed the wheelchairs were a fire hazard.

Julie replied: "These chairs are our legs. They do not fit in the seats and we refuse to be separated." Police were called and the two women were taken to the police station where they were charged with breach of peace and cited for creating a fire hazard.

The jails were not accessible and they were released on an oral promise to appear.

Julie filed a complaint with the State Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities, and the complaint is pending investigation. Julie hopes that a precedent will be established that people in wheelchairs should not be forced to sit in the movie theater equivalent of "the back of the bus" behind all other seats. In addition, persons using a wheelchair should be able to sit next to friends in the seats closest to the aisles. Finally, they should not be forced to give up their wheelchairs as this presents problems with rapid exits in case of fire or personal emergency.

The company that owns the cinema is United Artists Cinema, and it is hoped that a victory in Julie's case will force a clear-cut policy on United Artists and other theaters. As a gesture of solidarity and to help prevent future violations of civil rights, Society members may wish to inquire with local theaters as to their policy, if any, and advocate for wheelchair accessibility and seating policies which respect the rights and needs of people in wheelchairs. Meanwhile, local activists in Connecticut are boycotting the Jilson Square Cinemas in Willimantic until the matter is resolved.

### **Smith College Settles With Housekeepers Local 211**

BCRS Has been informed that Smith College has settled its dispute with its housekeeping staff, which has ratified a new contract. Forty seven BCRS members, attending last summer's annual meeting, signed a petition asking that the College bargain in good faith with Local 211.

In a letter to Fred Newdom, President Mary M. Dunn said that "The Housekeepers have bid for jobs, we have added several more positions in housekeeping, offered special training, and a good salary. I think everyone is satisfied."

## **OBITUARIES**

### **James Norman Dunn**

Dozens of friends and fellow activists of Jim Dunn gathered in celebration of his life in New York City on June 23, 1989. In what was only one of several events around the country marking his contributions, various speakers demonstrated how Jim made a difference in their lives and improved their ability to be effective in the struggle. Among the speakers and organizers of the event was Society member Donna Katzin.

James Norman Dunn, M.S., Ph.D., died at age 53 of cancer at his home in New Orleans on February 17, 1988. Dr. Dunn spent his life in the struggle for human justice. As a poet, teacher, singer and organizer, Jim Dunn was always in the front lines of civil rights marches, community empowerment efforts and student sit-ins. Since 1981, Dr. Dunn served as Co-founder and Director of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, conducting workshops on "undoing racism" here and abroad. He was an early endorser of the Society's Call to Join and formerly a member of the Board of Sponsors of "Catalyst: a Socialist Journal for the Social Services."

### **Norman N. Goroff**

Norman Goroff, Professor of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Connecticut Graduate School of Social Work and a well known figure in social work education died after suffering a heart attack while attending a conference in Montreal. Dr. Goroff was 64 at the time of his death last October.

A Columbia graduate, he received his MSW from Case Western and his doctorate from NYU. He had been on the graduate school faculty for 26 years.

### **SOCIAL WORKERS SUPPORT REVERSE FREEDOM CARAVAN**

The BCRS endorsement of the Chaney Goodman Schwerner Memorial Coalition in June '89 led to the involvement of dozens of members in supporting the Coalition's well-publicized activities. This was the first Coalition endorsed by the Society. But rather than stopping at a mere endorse-

ment, the Society actively involved itself through several activities which focused on such issues as racism and voter registration.

In some ways our work around this event put us on the political map of the broader progressive movement. We were able to work directly with the civil rights movement, the labor movement, and the growing movement for universal voter registration. And our presence was noted. A copy of our newsletter article on the Coalition was distributed by the Coalition to other groups in a national mailing as a sample of what other organizations could do to support the Caravan. As a result we got a call from the history department at the University of Wisconsin!

When the culminating event at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in NYC brought the inspirational end to the week's events, it was gratifying to note that the program brochure distributed to the thousands who attended the events in D.C. and NYC listed the names of some of the many social workers who had contributed. Just as we were a part of these events, it is hoped we can continue to be an ongoing part of the struggles discussed during the week, such as the need for a legislative remedy to the recent Supreme Court decisions and the need to defend existing affirmative action programs.

This involvement with broader struggles is consistent with our ten points, which call for the Society to "further coalition work between the human service community, the peace and labor movements and all social movements whose objectives are integral to the achievement of a caring, humanistic society." As the Society continues to develop a good balance between activism, education, organization building and supportive networking, perhaps the best way to develop clarity is through action. As Dean Harold Lewis of Hunter commented at our founding meeting in Chicago 4 years ago, perhaps our motto should be, "Act Like Her!"

# **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 check below.
- \$10 Student, unemployed, low income member  \$100 sustaining member
- \$25 Member  \$250 Institutional member

NAME (Please print or type)

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ADDRESS

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INSTITUTIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION (optional)

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TELEPHONE (Home)

(Work)

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*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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SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY — JULY 6-7, 1990**