

BCR REPORTS

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Globalization of the Economy: A Whole New World

Joel Blau

All the talk about a global economy has sparked a contentious debate. While the center of both the Republican and Democratic parties tries gamely to reassure the electorate that most Americans will eventually benefit from globalization of the U.S. economy, both the right and left spar among themselves about the trend's implications. On the right, populists like Patrick Buchanan have broken ranks with economic conservatives in the Republican Party who venerate the market regardless of what the market brings. On the left, many believe that globalization represents a substantially different kind of capitalism, one that alters the economy and substantially modifies class relations. Yet others such as Doug Henwood, the editor of the *Left Business Observer* and author of *Wall Street*, and Ellen Meikins Wood, the editor of *Monthly Review*, part company from this view. Rejecting the notion that capitalism has entered a new stage, they criticize the whole concept of globalization as a poor premise for analysis and political strategizing.

There is certainly plenty to argue about. Since 1950, total international trade has expanded by 6 percent a year, more than 50 percent faster than the growth in the world's Gross Domestic Product. The United States has led the way in this trend. Between 1970 and 1995, trade as a percentage of the

domestic economy rose from 10 to 24 percent. At this threshold, employers can make credible threats about moving overseas if workers organize, demand more money, or invoke comparatively strict environmental regulations. In one well-known study, Kate Bronfenbrenner, Director of Labor Education Research at Cornell University, found that unions won just 33 percent of all organizing campaigns where the company threatened to move, compared to 47 percent where no such threat was made.

Yet some significant qualifications intrude. In early 20th century, colonial rule boosted most measures of transnational trading and ownership above the current level. In addition, about 70 percent of U.S. trade still occurs with other high wage countries, who presumably do not underbid our wages like workers in Mexico and Southeast Asia do. And, of course, while globalization threatens both manufacturing and, increasingly, professional workers, many service workers remain invulnerable to global competition. So far at least, when you pull up to McDonald's for a cheeseburger, the burger still has to be cooked on the spot here.

Then what, if anything, is different? Enough, it seems to me, to be worth noticing. A purely statistical approach to this issue misses the power relationships that define the work place. As the Bronfenbrenner study demonstrates,

the mere threat of moving weakens workers without any product going through customs. Furthermore, the new trade is not resource-dependent. No longer is it English wheat for Portuguese wine, in David Ricardo's classic example, but one product for another, relying instead on technology and the increasing interchangeability of labor. If the work force of almost any nationality can assemble automobiles and computer parts, then labor – for the moment, anyway – has been outflanked, and social provision, which individual welfare states still provide, is not so robust either.

Over the next generation, our task is therefore both national and international. Nationally, we must move toward full employment and the kind of social programs that would ensure economic security for the vast majority of Americans. Internationally, to regain some leverage, we must make linkages with workers in other countries. Success in these tasks would, unqualifiedly, bring about a whole New World. ■

Joel Blau teaches social policy at S.U.N.Y. at Stony Brook. Early next year Oxford University Press will publish his book, The High Price of the Free Market: American Workers and Their Families in an Age of Economic Insecurity.

POOR PEOPLE'S SUMMIT PLANNED

Temple University School of Social Administration will join the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) in hosting a Poor People's Summit to be held in Philadelphia, PA October 9th-11th, 1998. Hundreds of representatives of grassroots Poor People's groups are expected to arrive at the gathering – many with their allies and advocates – looking for new ways to work together to end poverty, hunger, and homelessness.

Willie Baptist of the Kensington welfare rights union explains the motivation for the Summit as rooted in common experience. "We know we are hurting. More and more of us are hurting. Public welfare is being eliminated, and more and more people who are working full-time cannot afford to feed themselves and their families. We do not all agree on why we are hurting, but we know we are hurting, and we will start there and go from there."

The Summit is an outgrowth of a smaller gathering that took place at the Highlander Research and Education Center in October 1997. Sixteen groups of poor people, advocates, and allies, most of them from the South, spent a weekend in dialogue about their common concerns at the Highlander, an East Tennessee retreat well known for its work in the labor and civil rights movements. Calling themselves "The North-South Dialogue," the 16 groups have created an expanding network of Poor People's groups. Members of the North-South Dialogue will have primary responsibility for creating the program at the Poor People's Summit.

It is anticipated that hundreds of Poor People's groups will have input into the program as information about their issues and concerns will be gathered this summer when KWRU travels the country in their New Freedom Bus. The bus trip is part of another KWRU campaign, the Economic Human Rights Campaign. Alleging that America's welfare reform constitutes violations of

sections of the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, KWRU members will depart Philadelphia on June 1st and gather testimony and evidence of economic human rights violations as it crosses the country. On July 1st, KWRU members and supporters will cross the George Washington Bridge and deliver the documentation to the United Nations. Rallies and many tribunals are anticipated in the cities and towns along the route, and poor people will be polled to identify what must be covered at the summit.

Social workers will play a significant role in gathering the documentation for the Economic Human Rights Campaign, as they will in the Poor People's Summit. In January, schools and programs throughout the country were invited to participate in both campaigns by Curt Leonard, Dean of the School of Social Administration at Temple, and Mary Bricker-Jenkins, project coordinator. "This is a keystone observance of social work's 100th birthday," Dean Leonard said, "in this school that has been about social and economic justice since its beginnings."

Bricker-Jenkins said that approximately 50 schools and programs have responded to the call so far. In addition to collecting documentation for the economic human rights campaign, faculty and students are being

asked to find or, in some cases, organize Poor People's groups in their communities, tell them about the Summit, and do whatever is necessary to help representatives of the groups get to the Summit. "Usually this means fund-raising, but it can also mean providing child care, securing homes, gathering material and information for presentations, or making airplane reservations. Whatever it takes," said Bricker-Jenkins.

"Many schools and professional social workers already see the need for a movement to end poverty that is based in the leadership and organization of poor people," she continued. "Moving into our second century we would like to see the majority of our colleagues working in this movement as allies. The criminalization of poverty is intensifying daily. I don't think social workers want to be the Poverty Police. In this climate, we have to be 'partners in crime.' In part that means helping to create the conditions for organizations and leadership to emerge and lay claim to economic human rights for all." ■

For further information, contact the Poor People's Summit Organizing Committee, Temple University School of Social Administration c/o MBJ; 1301 Cecil B. Moore; Philadelphia, PA 19106. Or call Brigette Sancho, Outreach Coordinator, at (215) 204-2164.

Please forward all contributions for the next *BCR Reports* to:

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

Please note: The deadline for materials submitted for inclusion in the next *BCR Reports* is **September 1, 1998**.

THE HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS' RIGHTS INITIATIVE: HELPING HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS FIND A VOICE

The problem of inadequate workers' rights and poor working conditions is pervasive across the human service field. In the rush to privatize state human service agencies, both workers and clients are being trampled. Many human service workers don't make a living wage, and others have been moved from full time jobs with benefits to part time work with no benefits or job security. With workloads going up (in many cases) by 50% in the last five years, it is hard to do quality work.

The Human Service Workers' Rights Initiative views these agencies as middle management, with the state being the employer. Human service agencies now compete for government contracts in Massachusetts, with the contracts going often to the lowest bidder. If organizing were done in traditional ways, in one work place at a time, those organized workplaces would be at a competitive disadvantage. The campaign for worker rights needs to be large-scale and across traditional boundaries to be successful.

The Human Service Workers' Rights Initiative is trying to address the crisis in the field through non-traditional organizing methods. Then, by forming a broad-spectrum coalition of workers, students, labor, professional associations, and academic institutions, we hope to pressure the state government to change public policy and improve conditions for both workers and clients.

Unions have been very good at advocating for their members in this country. But if the goal of unions is, as stated by the AFL-CIO, to "achieve decent wages and conditions, democracy in the workplace, a full voice for working people in society, and the more equitable sharing of the wealth of the nation," then unions must be more than service organizations for their members. In fact, to the extent labor has not (until recently) worked for all employees' rights and benefits,

those very rights and benefits are now threatened. This is true because the discrepancy between union and non-union wages is so large there is great resistance to unions by employers. Unionized and non-unionized workers can easily compete with each other for limited jobs.**

The Initiative is also designed to educate human service workers about workers' rights. Many human service workers have trouble identifying themselves as workers who have rights. They tend to view themselves as individuals in the work place who are in the field for the clients, or as having protection because they are licensed professionals. Many are good at standing up for their clients' rights. We now need to learn how to stand up for our own rights.

"By bringing together workers who have few rights, who are isolated and often competing against each other" – by helping them understand and find collective vehicles for struggling for their rights, we are creating community in the field. It must not just be community, but a caring community. An ethic of care

must go into any organizing in the human service field.**

We are actively building a coalition. In our monthly meetings, we have gathered testimony from the field and listened to other community and union organizing struggles. We have joined the Jobs with Justice campaign around the right to organize in the work place. We will join CPPAX and the Massachusetts Employees Association on their lobby day for the contingent work bill and we have learned a great deal from the Worthy Wage Campaign in Child Care. In our next meeting, we will research and create a document of human service workers' rights and discuss other groups on the cutting edge of the labor movement. ■

For more information contact Rick Colbath-Hess (617) 354 6471
E-mail: RCCOLHESS @ aol.com

**"Why Unions Matter: Why Full Employment Matters to Unions," by Elaine Bernard. *Uncommon Sense #19*, National jobs for all coalition NY, NY.

BCRS MEMBER GIVEN BOOK AWARD

On December 10, 1997, *Under Attack, Fighting Back: Women and Welfare in the United States* (1996), was named "An Outstanding Book on the Subject of Human Rights" by the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in North America. The author, Mimi Abromovitz is professor of social policy at Hunter College School of Social Work and on the faculty of the Doctoral Program in Social Welfare, Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

The Gustavus Myers Center, which offers annual awards for the best scholarship on the subject of intolerance in North America, is named in honor of the author of the *History of Bigotry in the United States*. The sponsoring organizations include: B'nai B'rith; Fellowship of Reconciliation; *Free Inquiry*; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Conference of Christians and Jews; National Organization of Women; National Urban League; Parents, Families and Friends for Lesbians and Gays; Project Censored; and the Unitarian Universalist Church. ■

CHECK OUT BERTHA IN CYBERSPACE!

Thanks to BCRS Steering Committee member Keith Kilty, BCRS now has its own web site. Look for it at: <http://www.aztlan.net/bcrs/>

NEW VIDEOS AVAILABLE

Taylor's Campaign (1997) recently won a special jury award at the Big Muddy Film Festival in Carbondale, Illinois and it played at the Arizona International film festival in Tucson in April. Also, every Thursday evening it plays at the 11th Street Documentary Salon in Santa Monica.

TAYLOR'S CAMPAIGN: **75 minutes**

Angered by a series of ordinances that violate the rights of people who are homeless, Ron Taylor, a formerly homeless trucker ran for a seat on the city council of Santa Monica, California in 1994. The viewer is taken far from Taylor's political trail and into the harrowing lives of his supporters who live in an encampment of cardboard and plastic lean-tos. These hardworking people survive by retrieving recyclable goods from the garbage and by finding a sense of joy and safety together.

In one scene volunteers serve free meals to hungry people in the public park while across town a city councilman urges the passage of an ordinance prohibiting the charitable giving of food in the public parks. In another scene the encampment is dismantled by police in a crackdown on the homeless community. The camp's tenants are forced to leave town despite Taylor's tireless efforts to help them.

"Excellent documentary...cuts right to the heart of the plight of the homeless. Cohen clearly realizes the complexity of the issue he's tackling, shows us how easily many of us could end up on the streets ourselves and leaves us aware of a terrible vacuum in creative, morally imaginative leadership in our self-absorbed society."

— Kevin Thomas, Los Angeles Times

"Amazing and poignant. Provokes laughter, tears and much needed discussion."

— Christine Schanes, Co-director,
Children Helping Poor and Homeless People.

"Taylor's Campaign does an excellent job at portraying the nature of community among homeless people living on the street, and how vital these social ties are when people are faced with such extreme adverse conditions. Excellent documentary!"

— Jennifer Wolch, Prof. of Geography
University of Southern California
(Co-author of the book,
Malign Neglect)

Credits: Narrated by Martin Sheen,
Directed and edited by Richard Cohen

Premiere: October 1997 at the Denver International Film Festival, Northampton Film Festival, Virginia Film Festival; 1998: Big Muddy Film Festival (special jury award), Dallas Video Festival, East Lansing Film Festival.

HURRY TOMORROW (1975) **76 minutes:**

a film by Richard Cohen and Kevin Rafferty

Hurry Tomorrow is a powerful statement about the loss of human rights suffered by psychiatric patients and offers a shocking portrait of the side of psychiatry that is ordinarily hidden from public view.

This highly acclaimed vérité documentary was filmed over a six week period on a locked ward of a California State Hospital. It shows patients being tied down with straps and cuffs, forcibly drugged with tranquilizers, reducing them to helpless and zombie-like states. The film shares moments of warmth between inmates trying to keep some dignity in a dehumanized environment.

As soon as the film was released in 1975 there was an effort to ban it in California. Instead, the controversy led to a statewide investigation of patient deaths in the state hospital system.

"This ever timely, remarkable film provides a rare look into the workings of the mental health care system.

Educators and students in a wide range of disciplines can make a personal connection with the film's insights into the harsh realities of treatment of mental health patients, staff attitudes, and issues of patients' rights"

— Prof. Jean LaCour,
Psychology and Ethics,
California State University,
Los Angeles (1998)

"Hurry Tomorrow is the most important film on hospital life to emerge in the last ten years and goes way beyond 'Ticut Follies' or 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' in its indictment of mental hospital conditions. It is beautifully made and at times almost brings one to tears"

— Alan Rosenthal, *The Documentary Conscience*, UC Press, 1980

Purchase either tape: \$39 individuals for personal use, \$69 institutions and organizations – restricted to campus/educational use – (plus \$6 shipping and tax where necessary) Lending and rental libraries, and public shows – inquire. prices subject to change. Make checks out to Richard Cohen and send them to: Richard Cohen, 921 Eleventh Street, Santa Monica, CA 90403. E-mail: rbc23@juno.com Phone: (310) 395-3549. ■

BCRS MEMBER RUNS FOR NASW BOARD

Hilary N. Weaver, a BCRS member who teaches at SUNY Buffalo, is running for the position of Member-at-Large on the NASW Board of Directors. Hilary, who is Lakota, has been very involved with diversity issues in social work and hopes to use this board position to push NASW to be more inclusive and have more people of color in leadership positions. The election will take place this Spring. Those of you who are NASW members are encouraged to vote for Hilary. ■

DAVID SHAPIRO – CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE

David Shapiro is a member of the Bertha Reynolds Society and is running for Congress in California's 4th Congressional District. Shapiro is running a very unusual grass roots campaign, accepting no funds for the campaign and asking all to donate to organizations and projects doing good things to benefit the community.

Shapiro cut his social work teeth under the tutelage of Jack Goldberg, premier group worker and head of Wel-Met Camps and future Welfare Director of New York City. A graduate of Bronx High School of Science in 1960 and City College of New York in 1964, Shapiro first entered the University of Chicago's graduate sociology department and organized block clubs in South Chicago. Shapiro transferred to the University of Michigan's Joint Doctoral Program in Social Work and Sociology and was granted an M.S.W degree in 1968 and a Ph.D. in 1978.

Shapiro helped organize one of the largest rent strikes and tenants unions in Ann Arbor in 1969 and Welfare Rights Demonstrations of the same year. He got a teaching position at the School of Social Work, Sacramento, and two years later at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where he was appointed chair of the graduate program and was migrant camp coordinator of the first successful migrant strike on the East Coast.

Shapiro returned to Sacramento and continued teaching and field directed – with social work students and domestic workers – the organization of domestic and in home care workers who successfully won recognition to bargain in 1974.

Shapiro left teaching to become a full time labor and community organizer, living in the homes of poor members and field offices for ten years. In 1985, Shapiro wrote feature articles for the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council in Sacramento and was co-chair of the organizing committee. Shapiro moved into the foothills of the Sierras and was married in 1989 and has a 6-year-old son. Shapiro is active in building community associations and town halls in the unincorporated areas, and for the past three years has been a practicing medical social worker, providing home healthcare services to the elderly and sick throughout the 4th Congressional District of California.

Shapiro is trying to bring back traditional political leadership where politicians organize people for great undertakings, build consensus in the district and bring together organizations, churches and individuals who care about their community. Shapiro's grassroots politics has both progressive and conservative support. Without campaign funds Shapiro is trying to make real news, standing with constituencies around issues they support.

One of the main interests of his constituency is healthcare. The violation of the civil rights of the elderly through the denial of Medicare benefits by contract with the HMO's who take over Medicare is a principle target. In addition, Shapiro, inspired by recent Medicare billing changes and service caps and twenty percent decline in Medicare payments, has been instrumental in developing a national health care plan from patients and providers of care including nurses, home health aids and doctors that will be announced in the near future.

Shapiro is building several demonstration programs including a program to commemorate the Millennium where diverse groups of citizens led by youth are helping seniors and people in need in the community with construction and other self-help aid. Shapiro states, "through practice we have to bring people together from diverse backgrounds who have common interests and have been divided to reduce the total power of ordinary people. The Millennium should commemorate the great works of ordinary citizens to build our world."

Those interested in more information on the campaign can e-mail David Shapiro at davsha@jps.net. or 530-333-1272. ■

CHAPTER UPDATES:

NEW CHAPTER – Sacramento

California State University, Sacramento started a BCRS chapter in September 1997. The first meeting was aimed at increasing member awareness about Bertha Reynolds and discussing members interest in the organization. Our immediate focus will involve membership recruitment and organizing the new chapter. We decided that we would like the group to be comprised of both students and professionals; therefore, recruitment efforts will be directed at the general community, as well as on campus.

The chapter decided to function as an educational group that meets to discuss progressive issues in policy and practice as well as being an agent of social change. Our first social action involved an initiative that will appear on the June 1998 ballot. Currently in California, a group has gathered enough signatures to sponsor an initiative that dramatically alters the way bilingual education is taught. It basically eliminates bilingual education and substitutes it with an English-only immersion program. The name is quite deceptive – English for the Children Initiative. We feel that this initiative has significant class and race implications and that it will be presented in a misleading way to the voters, similar to Proposition 209 which ended affirmative action practices in California. Therefore, our goal was to educate the public regarding the facts and myths about bilingual education, so that voters can make an informed choice. A debate was held on December 4th, 1997 which allowed panelists to present the pros and cons of the initiative.

Each side had equal representation, time to present their case, and answer questions from audience members. The event was huge success.

Our next event will be to participate in a Teach-in for Democracy on the CSUS campus which will focus on corporate domination and economic globalization. The Sacramento BCRS

Chapter plans to remain informed about our community and will actively seek causes to promote.

Ann Arbor

During the Fall Semester, the Ann Arbor Chapter of BCRS held a brown bag lecture series directed at first year MSW students. The focus of the lecture series was on combining micro and macro social work practice. The group had a representative, Jim Gorman, help organize Michigan's "State of the People Address," a rebuttal of Governor John Engler's State of the State Address.

BCRS sponsored early Friday evening social hours for members and those interested at a local bar. In December, BCRS in Ann Arbor lost many members to graduation and welcomed two new co-leaders, Ida Faye Webster and Andrew Lehto.

St. Louis

The St. Louis Chapter of BCRS hosted the 1997 annual conference in June. This past fall, meetings focused on health care reform and campaign finance reform. Meetings have been held at both Saint Louis University as well as the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University.

Penn School of Social Work

This spring, the Penn Chapter: hosted a film series; joined social workers from the Philadelphia area to form SWEPT – Social Workers Ending Poverty Together – a group working in alliance with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union; and invited Deputy Mayor Donna Cooper and Jan Strout of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to deliver the fifth annual Lecture on Social Justice.

In observance of social work month, BCRS members arranged to have an exhibit of the photography of Penn alumnus Harvey Finkle; "Urban Nomads: A Poor People's Movement," which documents the history and actions of KWRU. The photos

replaced all wall hangings throughout the school. A closing reception honoring the artist and KWRU featured the KWRU/New Jerusalem choir.

Members Mark Stern, Michael Reisch and Ursula Bischoff presented a symposium commemorating 100 years of social work entitled "Welfare Reform: Analysis, Alternatives and Action" in late March.

Kalamazoo

The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society of Kalamazoo at Western Michigan University has had a busy 1997-98 year! Our major project in the fall was helping our friend and faculty advisor Don Cooney run for Kalamazoo City Commission. The Cooney Campaign worked hard; planning the campaign, attending Meet the Candidates nights, passing out literature, simply spreading the word throughout Kalamazoo neighborhoods. We were successful and are all proud of Don and his motivation to serve on the City Commission. Congratulations and great job so far, Don!

We were active in a variety of other events around the community such as the Oxfam Day of Fast for World Hunger and Reverend Searcy, Jr.'s "Call to Justice: Confronting Poverty in Kalamazoo" series. The Contempo Colours Strike in Kalamazoo was also of great interest to us and we worked to raise awareness about this issue around campus. We showed the film and followed it with a discussion about the strike and had a good turnout for this event.

Just recently we collaborated with WMU's Undergraduate Social Work Organization Eta Eta Sigma, for Days of Solidarity for Decent Housing. Seeking to address the issue of homelessness, inadequate low-income housing, and lack of safe and affordable housing in Kalamazoo, we led a march from campus to Bronson Park where we had a rally. Some of our excellent speakers included state representative Ed LaForge, Michelle Lewis from Housing Resources, Inc., student Sara Plachta, who volunteers at the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, and

Continued on next page ▶

WORKFARE AND THE NON-PROFITS?

Myths & Realities (Part Two)

by Mimi Abramovitz with The Task Force on Welfare Reform
New York City Chapter, National Association of Social Workers

(Editor's Note: Due to the length of this fact sheet, it has been printed in two consecutive issues of BCR Reports.
This is the second part.)

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MYTH: Everyone on Welfare Can Work

FACT: Not All Welfare Recipients Are In The Same Situation. Nationally, about 70% of women on welfare leave the rolls within 2 years. Others combine welfare and work.²⁴ But many women return to welfare due to layoffs, inadequate wages, domestic violence, lack of health benefits, child care services, or transportation. The ongoing decline of apparel manufacturing employment in New York and slowed growth in health care services, means less jobs for women with few skills. Still other women on welfare cannot work due to insufficient education and training; a mismatch between their skills and available jobs; illness, disability, emotional problems; or the presence of old, young or sick relatives at home who require their care.

DILEMMA: Workfare rules place non-profits in collusion with a system that does not recognize the impact of labor market changes on the work opportunities for low-skilled women nor the individuality of recipients and their families.

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MYTH: Workfare Does Not Displace Regular Workers.

FACT: Workfare Recipients Typically Do The Work Previously Done By Waged Workers Earning Full Wages. New York City promised not to replace laid-off unionized workers with workfare participants. Instead some 20,000 full-time city jobs were eliminated through attrition and aggressive severance packages and replaced with 37,000 half-time

workfare slots. Workfare workers now comprise about 3/4 of the Parks Department and 1/3 of the Sanitation Department's labor force.²⁵ The same anti-displacement rules apply to the non-profits. In May 1997, unions filed a court case against the city that, while still pending, asserts that workfare violates the state law prohibiting workfare assignees from displacing or performing work ordinarily done by regular employees.²⁶

DILEMMA: Replacing waged workers with workfare participants not only shrinks the supply of regular jobs in New York City but is deeply divisive. Workfare recipients resent being blamed for the city's mean-spirited effort to lower its labor costs and weaken trade unions by using welfare recipients to get the job done. Having been denied coats and protective gloves, exposed to hazardous materials, and blocked from other real training opportunities, some workfare participants say they feel like "indentured servants."²⁷ Meanwhile regular city workers cannot help but resent workfare workers for taking the "jobs" of their former colleagues and fearing the same for themselves.

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MYTH: Workfare Increases "Self-Sufficiency."

FACT: Workfare Subsidizes Poverty. A New York mother with two children working off her welfare benefits in a city or non-profit agency receives her basic monthly welfare grant of \$577 from TANF and \$256 from Food Stamps. This \$9996 yearly welfare income falls far below the 1997 official \$13,330-a-year poverty line for a family of three. Childless adults on home relief receive \$352 a month

in benefits and \$110 in Food Stamps or \$5544 a year compared to the poverty line of \$7890 for a one person family.²⁸ In addition to low benefits for recipients, former city workers who were replaced by workfare participants may find themselves in lower-paying jobs, jobless, or on welfare themselves. The recent ruling by the State Supreme Court that workfare violates NY State's prevailing wage law (which states that "payment credits" for work done by workfare participants engaged in "public works" projects be made at the State minimum wage or, if higher, at the wage paid to regular employees for comparable work) underscores the meagerness of the benefits.²⁹ The City appealed because the higher prevailing wage rate would reduce the number of hours WEP workers must work in exchange for their benefits. In an attempt to undermine the Court decision, the New York State Legislature changed some, but not all, of the provisions of the social service law on which the case rested. Advocates continue to pursue prevailing wage protections in the courts.

DILEMMA: Workfare keeps participants poor and can impoverish former city workers. Public sector employment historically was a route into the middle class for women, immigrants and persons of color whom the private sector refused to hire. The expansion of workfare and the shrinking of the City's union workforce, has all but eliminated this option for disadvantaged groups. Will workfare place the non-profit sector down the same troublesome path?

MYTH: Workfare Takes Children Into Account

FACT: Workfare Increases Caretaking Burdens. Workfare initially targeted single, childless adults receiving Home Relief. Now, pressed by the new federal law to place 50% of single mothers on TANF into work activities by 2002, states are assigning mothers, grandmothers, and even foster parents who qualify for public assistance to workfare. Many parents will have to choose between abiding by workfare rules or raising their children, until their five year time limit is up when they will be kicked off the rolls altogether. Some women will manage, but the pressures combined with ordinary stresses of grinding poverty, ensure that many more children will end up in the more costly and already beleaguered foster care system because their mother cannot provide for them or because they have been neglected or abused.³⁰

DILEMMA: Workfare risks depriving thousands of poor children proper care in their own and in foster homes. Non-profits will be faced with the troublesome reality that accepting workfare placements exacerbates the city's already severe foster parent shortage. The stiff work requirement interfere with the ability of foster parents on TANF to care for children and threatens to discourage others on public aid from stepping forward to serve as foster parents.

MYTH : Workfare Comes With Sufficient Child Care Services

FACT: Workfare Increases But Does Not Meet the Demand For Child Care Services. As tens of thousands of welfare mothers are pushed into jobs and work programs, the demand for good child care services is soaring. New York is expected to need more than 500, 000 additional child care slots for children over age 5, but federal welfare law does not guarantee child care for this group.³¹ Given the existing shortage of child care centers and their high costs, some states now

register, but do not license family day care providers, who care for the children in their own home. Other recipients rely on friends, relatives or neighbors – unlicensed informal providers who are not monitored by the city and who may lack training, experience, aptitude or have a criminal record. Even with additional state funding welfare and other low income, mothers have been pitted against each other in the race of child care.

DILEMMA: Stiff work rules have increased the demand but not the supply of services provided by (1) licensed home care providers, many of whom are satisfying their own work requirements; (2) for-profit and not-profit child care centers that often hire former welfare recipients; and (3) unlicensed caretakers who may or may not offer quality care. Officialdom seems to trust women on welfare to care for any child but their own.

MYTH: Workfare Provides Battered Women With The Opportunity To Flee Abusive Relationships

FACT: Workfare Undercuts A Woman's Ability to Deal With Male Violence in the Home. Researchers have recently learned that from 30% to 75% of women in welfare-to-work programs are being physically or emotionally abused by partners and that forcing women to work may precipitate male violence. Mounting evidence suggests that abusive or controlling partners, who may be threatened by a woman's efforts to gain financial independence through education or job training, find ways to sabotage her participation in these programs by failing to provide promised child care, harassing her on the job site, or inflicting serious injuries to prevent her from leaving home. Workfare rules do not account for this or the lasting emotional and psychological scars of abuse that can impair a woman's future employability.³²

DILEMMA: Workfare's strict rules, along with time limits and child support enforcement promise to place women at greater risk for abuse or increase sanctions for lateness and absenteeism that often follow battering. Many non-profit agencies accepting workfare participants also run shelters for battered women or otherwise provide them with services. Will assisting the workfare program increase the number of women who show up battered at the agency's own doors? In sharp contrast, the availability of the meager welfare grant can provide a woman with a way out of an abusive relationship when the lack of money is keeping her there.

MYTH: Workfare Saves Taxpayers Money.

FACT: Workfare Is Expensive And May Generate Additional Costs. The NYC Independent Budget Office (IBO) projected that a workfare placement would cost \$6100 a year in addition to the household's public assistance and food stamp benefits.³³ The Congressional Budget Office, (CBO) estimated that it would take \$6300 a year beyond the cost of the welfare grant to cover a recipient's work-related and child care expenses as well as the supervisory and administrative costs of a workfare slot. Federal grants budget less for more useful job creation programs.³⁴

DILEMMA : Funds could better be spent by providing resources to non-profits to expand support services, job training, and job placement services and by funding government programs that create jobs and increase economic security.

MYTH: Workfare Helps New York's Economy

FACT: Workfare Depresses Wages, Weakens Labor Standards, Lowers Tax Revenues And Otherwise Harms NYC's Economy. Workfare and other work requirements are flooding the labor market with droves of hungry

people, making it easier for employers to depress wages and harder for unions to negotiate good contracts for any low-paid worker. Labor economists predict that the expansion of workfare in NYC will displace thousands of workers and lower wages for the bottom third of the workforce by 15.4%, or some combination of both.³⁵ Workfare programs also lower labor standards and weaken unions that protect all workers. The combination of displaced jobless workers, non-taxed workfare recipients, and stagnant wage rates across the labor market also lowers tax revenues available for municipal services used by all of us.

DILEMMA: Lower wages harm the economy by reducing the purchasing power of all city families. Lower tax revenues reduce the funds spent on social services, including those provided by non-profits, just when government funders and regulators are increasing expectations and pressing them for more services.

—15—

MYTH: Workfare Recipients Favor Workfare.

FACT: Workfare Workers Are Fighting For Change. While some workfare recipients in New York City report that workfare got them going. Others have deplored the program – long before the death of a workfare recipient who was assigned to the Parks Department even though heart disease had previously forced her to quit a secretarial job. The opponents in the workfare rank have gone public. They testify at public hearings and educational forums about their horrific working conditions and organized protests at welfare offices – despite the risk of losing their benefits for doing so. In July 1997 ACORN, a community group that works with the poor, collected signatures from 13,000 of the City's 37,000 workfare participants who demanded to form a union. District Council³⁷, AFSCME, the union of 120,000 municipal employees has also begun to unionize these WEP workers.³⁶ The AFL-CIO has

also announced its support of these organizing efforts.

DILEMMA: If workfare workers are willing to risk their benefits by speaking out, can the non-profits do any less?

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Don Cooney. The rally was a prelude to Saturday's Walk for the Homeless, sponsored by Housing Resources, Inc. The weekend was productive and fun.

Our final project for the year was helping out with our community welfare hearings sponsored by The Michigan Assemblies Project. We recruited a diverse steering committee to hear the testimonies of community members about living with the new welfare reforms enacted by Michigan Governor John Engler. After the hearings, the committee members will go back with what they've learned to the groups they represent, and get input. The committee will then meet again to compile the information – what is working, what isn't, what needs to be changed and how, etc., and submit that to the state government. The Michigan Assemblies Project is happening in ten other Michigan cities, and the state will get results from all of these hearings and take them into consideration in creating new legislation. We are hoping things will go well and the community will act together to improve the injustice around us.

As we move into spring, we are looking into working with the churches of Kalamazoo to come together for a major community event. Reverend Searcy will return to Kalamazoo to guide us into this significant endeavor. We feel a need for unity within the community, and with so many strong church families in Kalamazoo, the connection of these resources would be very beneficial in helping to bring about social change. This new project is an exciting challenge, and we're ready.

Perhaps one day this organization won't have to exist. Until then, we continue to work enthusiastically toward our shared dream of social justice, seeking new ideas, new faces, new resources, and never giving up. Our members are committed and our work is from the heart. ■

Bertha says: YA'LL COME NOW, Y'HEAR?

This year's BCRS National Conference in Houston, TX is not one you will want to miss. In fact, if you're tired of going to progressive gatherings where discussion about injustice runs circles around proactive solutions, the activist in you couldn't bear to miss this conference.

Daring to Struggle Together: Let's Talk, Let's Act is scheduled over the weekend of June 26-28, 1998 and is co-sponsored by the University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work. This year's conference aims to create a forum in which progressives with diverse interests and concerns are able to identify ways in which we can unite to confront attacks on human rights, marginalized groups, and the welfare state. In short, the conference's foremost goal is to move us beyond discussion of problems to generating solutions that lead to action.

Conference sessions will highlight regional issues in Texas and the South that are of national and/or international concern. We have human service workers, academics, students, union organizers, and grassroots activists joining us throughout the weekend to cover a variety of issues facing progressives today.

Specifically, the 2-½ days will include:

- Two plenary sessions: Ernesto Cortes with the Industrial Areas Foundation is our keynote speaker and KWRU will lead an exciting plenary regarding their national Economic Human Rights Campaign and report to us about their New Freedom Bus Tour.
- Six half day training sessions on immigrant rights, domestic violence and advocacy, confronting racism, labor union organizing, welfare reform, and progressive pedagogy. These training sessions are meant to provide attendees with greater depth in a particular area of interest.
- A direct action with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) as part of their nationwide Economic Human Rights Campaign '98. Campaign participants will arrive on a Freedom Bus and lead conference participants and local poor people's groups in a protest to demand freedom from unemployment, hunger, and homelessness. Houston is the last stop as they return to New York and march to the United Nations where they will report on the human rights abuses documented throughout the country.
- More than 30 workshops which will address human rights, issues of race, class, gender and/or sexual orientation – from preserving affirmative action to protecting the rights of Latinos and immigrants along the increasingly militarized Texas-Mexico border.
- An invitation to participate in Houston's 1998 Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade – the only night parade of its kind in the nation.

To make it more affordable for participants, early registrants pay \$40 less when they register by June 1st, six meals will be included in the conference fee, on-site accommodations in the dorms for \$20-30 will be available, and airline fares will be discounted when coming to Houston for the conference.

The conference brochure with further conference and registration information was mailed to all Bertha members in April. However, if you need more information or would like additional brochures to share with others, please call our conference info line (713) 942-4863 or email Scollins@uh.edu. ■

Reflections on Working with Bertha Capen Reynolds

by Paul Chapman

Who is this little old lady who serves as secretary of the Stoughton, Massachusetts, Fair Housing and Human Rights Association? Driven in the family's fragile Model A Ford by her older brother, Frank, she never misses the weekly meetings of about a dozen locals who are actively making it possible for blacks to buy houses in this working class town 15 miles south of Boston. We're doing a lot of testing, sending couples to try to buy a house just after a black family has been refused. If race discrimination is suspected the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination will quickly intervene and the house can't be sold until the case is investigated. Few realtors can afford to wait. Thus Stoughton is being successfully integrated by these tactics, and the story is being faithfully recorded by our Secretary, Bertha C. Reynolds. It is 1962.

We didn't fully appreciate at the time how much Bertha meant to our success. We had no clue to her previous life. She so successfully moved with the rhythm of what was now her circumstance that it was only after ten years of knowing Bertha Reynolds at these meetings and at Methodist church activities that I was amazed to learn about her innovative career as teacher, administrator and psychiatric case worker.

The conference center for which I worked in the town of Stoughton was sponsoring a conference for social workers. She phoned saying that she had once been a social worker and could she sit in on the meetings. Of course! I picked her up early and when the first regular participant arrived and saw her, her mouth dropped and she exclaimed simply, "Bertha Reynolds!" I was dumbfounded – especially since each new arrival expressed similar

surprise and pleasure at meeting a person long lost but not forgotten, It was like a resurrection.

It's a testimony to her integrity that when Bertha Reynolds retired in her mid-60s she chose a new life, resisting any temptation to lean on her previous reputation. Humbly, discreetly, with an uncanny flexibility of spirit, she moved back into the old Capen homestead and became one of us, starting life all over again. It was surely not easy for her. She thought of herself as neither old, nor washed up. Her analysis and sense of justice was as decisive as ever, but her new milieu was this nondescript Boston suburb in an old 1839 farmhouse with a big barn under the town's high tension electric wires.

Was she really content here or did she burn inside with restlessness? Was this the real Bertha Reynolds playing the piano and singing at church, leading study groups and writing Fair Housing minutes?

Amazingly, **I think she had the grace to be at peace with her new incognito life, perhaps chuckling to herself in this strange world, where she held quite different views from the others in the "grandmothers' club."** She writes, "Dispensing of an overgrown sense of mission is difficult, but there are new things to learn in any situation." She met the challenge of being a small town retiree with the same integrity that she brought to Smith College decades before.

In retrospect, I certainly wish I had gotten closer to Bertha Reynolds, and that she had more freely shared the insights of her professional career. Friendly enough, she was always somewhat aloof, marked from her earliest days by New England taciturn-

ity. While writing in her autobiography that she longed to perfect human relationship, all her life she remained a loner, deeply caring but also somewhat isolated and distant.

When I asked her to autograph my copy of *Unchartered Journey*, I imagined her writing, "How good it has been to work with you for justice all these years." But no, she wrote simply, "Cordially yours, Bertha C. Reynolds."

Sample Minutes of the Stoughton Fair Housing and Human Rights Association, recorded by Bertha C. Reynolds, Secretary of the Association

A discussion of the boycott of Wonder Bread, April 23, 1963

"The campaign to secure job opportunities for Negro workers with Continental Baking Company began last October on the initiative of students, mostly from Dartmouth. Negotiations with the Company got nowhere. Information regarding working and living conditions in the Negro community in Roxbury and Dorchester where Wonder Bread was sold was barred from the newspapers. Later it was learned that the Company spent much money to keep out of the papers news of the boycott which started March 24th against Wonder Bread. Labor unions of white driver-salesmen were at first hostile, but visits to union meetings and talks showing how their own interests were involved won their cooperation. The boycott won all its demands, including placement of 12 Negro driver-salesmen and workers in secretarial and other positions. Some other companies, foreseeing spread of the

Continued on next page

boycott technique began to integrate their working force. The lesson of the value of united community action is obvious."

A discussion of the Boston Public School system, March 16, 1965

"Boston school situation is deteriorating. The schools are producing unskilled laborers at a time when good education is demanded for employees. Boston rates 35 on scale of 100 in reading skills, while the national average is 50. Boston will lose its industrial standing and appeal to home buyers if something drastic is not done to improve the schools. The Negro community has been leading in alerting the city, but have exhausted resources since the School Committee will not acknowledge that a problem exists. Petitioners must now turn to the power in the business community to compel change, once they feel economic pressure. A Committee has called on each member of the executive board of the Chamber of Commerce to urge taking some civic responsibility for this situation. They have warned that pressure will be applied to some selected target, and a law firm, Gray and Cooledge has been chosen. Yesterday and today, for an hour at a time, their telephones have been jammed with calls, from a prepared script, showing how serious the situation is. Children are being destroyed. The paralysis of a child's chance to learn is 'educational genocide.' A fast by clergy in a church is also being planned." ■

For 18 years as a resident of Stoughton, Massachusetts, Paul Chapman directed an intentional community seeking to overcome racial and class divisions in our society. He now directs The Employment Project in New York City, a resource for economic justice.

ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

"We will accept nothing less than human rights. We will know them and claim them for every woman, man, youth, and child, from those who speak human rights but deny them to their own people."

— Shulamith Koenig

People's Decade of Human Rights Education

The Economic Human Rights Campaign '98 and the March for Our Lives 1998 are sponsored by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. KWRU, based in Philadelphia, is a chapter of the National Welfare Rights Union, an affiliate of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, and an affiliate of the Labor Party.

BCRS and Kensington have worked together for several years now, with Kensington presenting at the 1996 and 1997 BCR conferences, and BCR supporting KWRU actions and demonstrations in Philadelphia and New York. This year, Kensington is sponsoring a Poor People's Embassy to organize poor people and others affected by welfare reform, downsizing, hunger and homelessness across the country as they hold demonstrations, document economic human rights abuses, attend organizing schools, and build leadership among the poor and their allies, demanding the rights for food, housing, health care, education, and living-wage jobs identified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In June, the KWRU Freedom Bus is travelling around the country, stopping in poor communities to collect documentation of economic human rights violations. On July 1st, the bus joins the March for Our Lives as it crosses into New York City to present the documentation at the United Nations in a tribunal to hold the United States government responsible for violating the human rights of poor people in this country.

We are using a telephone tree to notify BCRS members if the bus is coming your way. Please write a short account and send it with any news

clippings to our editor, Barbara Kasper, for inclusion in the Fall newsletter.

Schedule of Stops for the KWRU Freedom Bus

Boston, MA	June 1
Springfield, MA	June 2
Rochester, NY	June 3
Lorain, OH	June 4
Pittsburgh, PA	June 5 (12:30pm - 3:00 pm)
Welch, West VA	June 5
Durham, NC	June 6
Knoxville, TN Highlander	June 7
Atlanta, GA	June 9
Waycross, GA	June 10
Jackson, MS	June 11 (7:00 am - 3:00 pm)
Little Rock, AK	June 11 (10:00 pm)
Detroit, MI	June 14
Chicago, IL	June 15
Milwaukee, WI	June 17 (10:00 am- 1:00 pm)
Minneapolis, MN	June 17-18
Denver, CO	June 19
San Francisco, CA	June 21
Los Angeles, CA	June 22-24
El Paso, TX	June 25
Washington, DC	June 28
Philadelphia, PA	June 29
Elizabeth, NJ	June 30 (noon - 3:00 pm)
Ft. Lee, NJ	June 30
New York City	July 1
United Nations	July 1 (4:00 pm)

From the Streets to City Hall

Don Cooney

In early August this past year a faith-based Social Justice organization, the Coalition of Compassion, asked me to run as a candidate in the upcoming Kalamazoo City Commission election. The idea was not that I would win but that there would be someone in the Campaign to raise issues of Social Justice. My wife Kathy and I talked it over and we agreed that although there was already no time in the schedule this was a great opportunity to challenge the City on such issues as child poverty, non-existent housing for low income people, jobs paying nowhere near a living wage. Besides it would all be over by November 4.

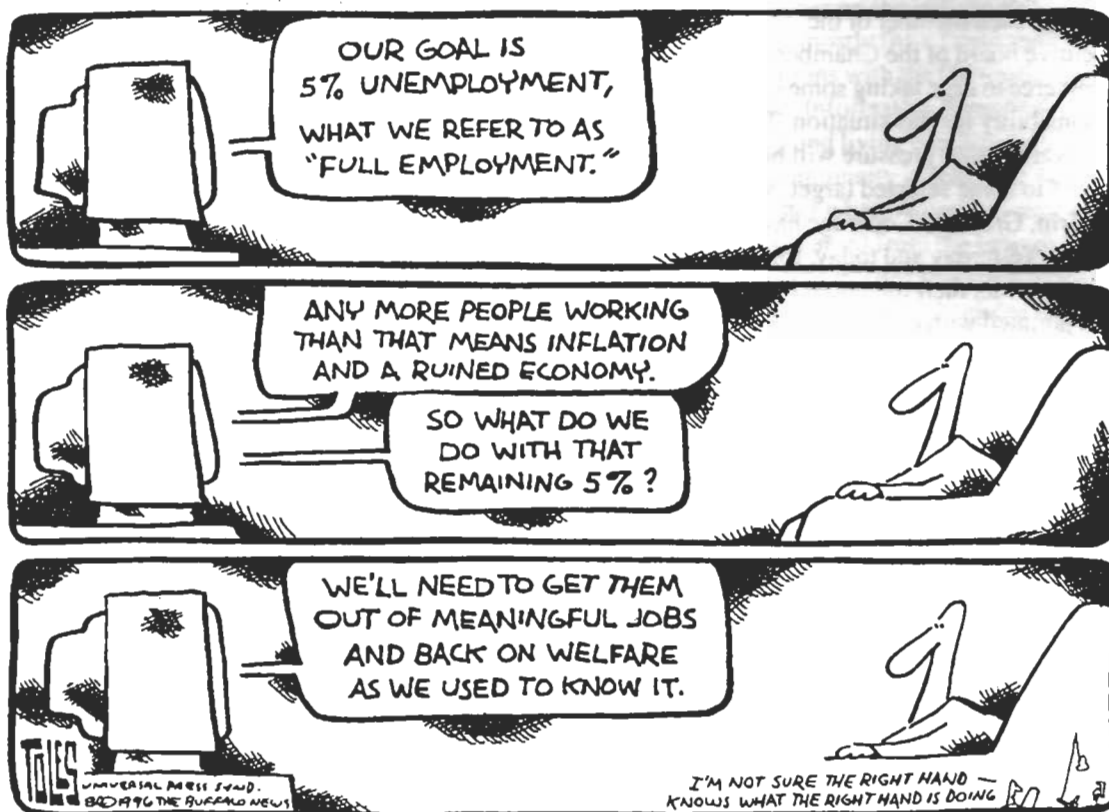
We came out swinging with an uncompromising call for a reordering of Priorities; the City's primary investment must be in our people. To our surprise the message caught on and we began to build a progressive coalition for the campaign. Co-Campaign Managers were a local activist who was also a whiz at Cable Access TV, and a 22 year old recent graduate of the local School of Social Work. With 21 years of activism in this City and a campaign team clearly different and committed to social justice we couldn't have sugarcoated our message if we wanted to. We were the longest of longshots but we pressed on. In

the end we were (barely) able to beat out three incumbents and a former County Commissioner in one of the biggest upsets in the City's history

Kalamazoo is a city of about 80,000 people and is a microcosm of U.S. urban society. We have an astounding 36% poverty rate for children under 5. There are twice as many low-income families as there are low cost housing units. The unemployment rate is only 3.5% but the poverty rate is 20% – jobs without a living wage. Shortly after the election the City's biggest employer, Upjohn Pharmaceutical Company, announced they were moving headquarters to New Jersey and taking 600 jobs with them. Two months later the second biggest employer, First of America Bank, was bought out by a bank from

Cleveland – more jobs gone. The economy booms for some but is a bust for too many of our people.

We are trying to use our position to make a real difference in people's lives. Our goals are to put issues of justice high on the City's agenda, to give working class, poor and disadvantaged people a voice, to dramatically increase the resources available to working class and poor. It is a difficult arena, much different than movement organizing and I have a lot to learn. Nevertheless there have been early successes and we are bold enough to believe that local government can work for all the people and that it is possible to build a model of a community seeking liberty and justice for all. ■



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