

# BCR REPORTS

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Social Welfare Action Alliance

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## WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

**T**here's an old union song that asks that pointed question. A chorus from that song goes:

*They say in Harlan County  
There are no neutrals there;  
You'll either be a union man  
Or a thug for J. H. Blair.*

*Which side are you on?  
Which side are you on?*

The Social Welfare Action Alliance (formerly BCRS – see story on page 3) has, over the years, stood side by side with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU) in their struggle to better the lives of poor people. We have stood and marched with them at rallies at our conferences in Houston, Philadelphia, and Northampton. We have joined and supported their marches to the U.N. And we have provided allies within the social welfare arena when that would be helpful.

We do this because, in our estimation, the KWRU represents the most radical effective client voice within the social welfare world, the place we do our work. SWAA has, over the years, asserted that the myth of “professional neutrality” must be challenged. In the welfare state, “there are no neutrals there.” We'll either stand with clients or we are complicit in the abuses that get perpetrated on clients in the name of welfare reform or child protection or personal responsibility. We all, by our action or inaction, can wind up being a

thug for the J. H. Blair of the moment – a Newt Gingrich or a Bill Clinton or a William Weld. So we choose to stand with the union.

In this period, the above position is even more important. It is clear that KWRU is being recognized as a threat to the capacity of the anti-welfare crowd to carry out their agenda. One sign of this is the increasingly heavy-handed response to KWRU actions. When, in the past, KWRU took over abandoned buildings to house homeless people, they faced misdemeanor charges and fines. Over this past summer, the same actions have led to felony charges. More ominously, the police are now alleging that “bomb making materials” have been found at buildings taken over by KWRU.

This is, in my estimation, an effort to set the stage for a violent repression of KWRU. Painting them as criminals with the capacity to be violent will make a deadly assault on them more acceptable to the public. Remember the murderous assault on MOVE in Philadelphia or the raids in which

Black Panther Party leaders were killed as they lay in bed. These acts were preceded by a coordinated effort to demonize radical organizations. If KWRU can be isolated, with their allies scared off, then they are at risk of the same violence that ended in the deaths of so many effective radicals in the 1960's and 1970's.

As another old union song says:

*When the union's inspiration,  
through the worker's blood shall run,  
There can be no power greater  
anywhere beneath the sun,  
Yet what force on earth is weaker  
than the feeble strength of one?  
But the union makes us strong.*

In solidarity with KWRU we support their organization and ours. Together (again from Solidarity Forever) “we can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.”

Especially at this time, there can be no neutrals there. Which side are you on? ■

– Fred Newdom

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A SWAA CHAPTER:

“How to Organize a SWAA Chapter” organizing packets are available by contacting Mel at Communication Services at (518) 438-2826, 50 Colvin Ave., Albany, NY 12206 or at [commserv@nyap.rr.com](mailto:commserv@nyap.rr.com). The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletters, copy of by-laws, names of SWAA organizers from the Steering Committee who will help you, and much more! Allow 4 weeks for delivery. ■

# THE SOCIAL SECURITY PRIMER: AN ADVOCACY TOOL

— by Michel Coconis

**S**ocial work and human service providers and educators will find a much-needed tool the new Social Security Primer prepared by SWAA members Mimi Abramovitz, Ken Grossinger, and Jerry Sachs. They have provided us with a meaningful look at the key issues facing us as we consider what avenues are to be pursued, if any, with regard to the Social Security “crisis”. This materials compilation and analysis will provide teachers, organizers, workers, and citizens to develop a deeper understanding of the many proposals to “reform” Social Security, America’s most successful social program.

The Social Welfare Action Alliance (formerly the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society) supports advocacy and action on many issues that affect the daily lives of people. Far from perfect, the Social Security program is the only protection we have against the loss of income due to retirement, disability or death of a worker. Except for the very rich, private pensions and individual savings are not enough to live on. But, thanks to Social Security, people do not live out their lives in dire poverty.

The government needs to fix Social Security’s long-run financial problems. The current proposals, analyzed within this primer, raise important questions, especially about how to fund the Social Security program in the future. Some people think that proposals to use the budget surplus represents a good idea. Others fear that depleting the surplus in this way will reduce the funds available for other important social programs.

A second debate, featured in this advocacy tool, focuses on whether or not to invest Social Security funds in the stock market. Some say individuals should do the investing. Others say the government should. Still others argue that it is a mistake to invest any Social Security funds in the stock market.

Finally, few, if any, proposals include the idea of raising funds for Social Security by eliminating the wage ceiling on which people now pay their Social Security taxes. Under this proposal, upper income groups will contribute more. The contributors also point out Social Security reforms which lower benefits or raise the payroll taxes on anyone but the wealthy, put workers and their families at risk for losing the foundation of their retirement income.

SWAA seeks to stem the conservative propositions. As a countermeasure to many publications, though not popularly available, Abramovitz, Grossinger, and Sachs have contributed handily to the information available to us as these debates continue and grow increasingly heated and intense, possibly resulting in a too speedy and under-analyzed acceptance of conservative proposals.

This tool describes the Social Security program, the drive towards privatization, the impact of so-called “reform” on different social groups, and introduction and comparison

of mainstream proposals and similar reform efforts in other countries. Anyone who uses this primer has a strong base for organizing constituencies to discuss the issues of security and threats to that security which were a part of the originating policy. Anyone concerned with the future of this program, the health and long-term economic well being of all families — not just the wealthy families of the U.S. — will find this guide a most helpful resource. ■

*PREPARED BY: Mimi Abramovitz, Professor, Hunter College School of Social Work, New York, NY\**

*Ken Grossinger, Department of Legislation AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C.\**

*Jerry Sachs, Associate Professor, Smith College School of Social Work, Northampton, MA\**

(\*Organizations listed for identification purposes only)

## ORDER FORM

### THE SOCIAL SECURITY PRIMER: AN ADVOCACY TOOL

Prepared for the Social Welfare Action Alliance (formerly the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society) by Mimi Abramovitz, Hunter College School of Social Work, Ken Grossinger, Department of Legislation AFL-CIO, and Jerry Sachs, Smith College School of Social Work.\*

(\*Organizations listed for identification purposes only).

The Primer describes the Social Security program, the drive toward privatization, the impact of “reform” on different groups, mainstream proposals and similar reform efforts in other countries. We felt that it was important to bring some of the existing material together to help our network and other activists around the country develop progressive proposals and critiques.

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ (no.) of *Social Security Primer: An Advocacy Tool* @ \$9.00 per copy which includes the postage and duplication.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of copies ordered \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$9.00 each

Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Social Welfare Action Alliance.

Mail to: Social Welfare Action Alliance  
(Formerly Bertha Capen Reynolds Society)  
Social Security Primer  
Columbus Circle Station  
PO Box 20563  
New York, NY 10023

# GET UP/STAND UP: The BCRS Conference Creates Alliances For Economic Justice

**O**n June 25-27, 1999, the Smith College School for Social Work was once again host to a gathering of more than 200 social welfare activists, workers, students and teachers, from more than 20 states. This year the conference focused on building alliances for economic justice.

From the beginning, conference planners were clear that "various social justice movements all have an important contribution to make in building 'one big movement'." So our work at the conference centered around identifying what people across many areas of activism have in common, exploring ways to work together despite our differences, and developing an inclusive vision to guide us in the work ahead.

The conference lived up to its planners' hopes by providing a wide mix of people with the opportunity to think, talk and act together, while we gave each other support in continuing our hard work. Special recognition goes to members of ARISE for Social Justice, the Springfield low income activist group, who served on our planning committee, as well as prepared several workshops, and to the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, which brought two vans of people to the conference and worked hard to make sure that the poor people's movement was a part of almost all the workshops. Together, these two allies helped us feel that we were "really in the struggle, not just analyzing it," as one speaker noted.

The conference began on Friday morning with an interactive exercise and a performance poetry presentation by Linda Carney, a former welfare recipient and popular educator. This established that the conference was to be one where low income women and activists set the tone, and where no one was expected to act like too much of a professional or academic, but where we were all learning and seeking after change together.

To reinforce this message we tried a new format and held brief initial

Foundations Workshops to introduce major assumptions, facts, and approaches so that conference participants could have a comparable base of information for working together. We assumed that everyone needed to be introduced to some of the content and methods that resonated throughout the conference and urged participants to attend the workshop about which they knew the least. The response was very positive to workshops conducted by activists from around the country. They included such topics as: Facing Economic Realities; Popular Education And Political Action; Policies That

Oppress Us: Welfare & Immigration Reforms and The Mental Health Managed Care; Facing The World As A Radical In Social Welfare; Organizing Strategies And Options For Today; Beyond Reacting: Alternative Visions Of What We Really Want; Diversity As A Resource For Connections; and Issues And Style Of Union Politics.

After giving folks some time (but not enough according to some participants) for lunch and connecting, we scheduled longer afternoon Institutes to give us time to hear about each others' efforts and begin to build the skills needed for action. Most involved

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## THE SOCIAL WELFARE ACTION ALLIANCE (formerly Bertha Reynolds Society) IS BORN

**I**n our last newsletter, we announced that our name had changed to Social Welfare Workers for Justice. We had come to that decision after lengthy discussion among the National Steering Committee, articles in the newsletter announcing our belief that it would be useful to do so and outlining our reasoning and calls for comments and suggestions.

What we heard was that there was a reluctant willingness to make that change. People regretted giving up Bertha's name (as our title) but recognized that something more descriptive of who we are would help in building alliances with other organizations. We announced the decision at our 1999 conference and scheduled a session to discuss the name change there.

At that meeting, we reviewed the thinking that led to our decision, offered another opportunity for member input, and heard, loud and clear, that the thinking was fine but the new name wasn't. OK – back to the drawing board, actually the flip chart. We

discussed a range of names (and varying combinations of words), narrowed the choices, and agreed to make a decision in another open discussion on the Sunday morning of the conference. Out of that discussion, a consensus emerged. We are the Social Welfare Action Alliance (formerly the Bertha Reynolds Society).

This whole process exemplifies both the opportunities and difficulties of making democratic decisions in an organization like ours. We communicated with our members in the primary vehicle we have for the purpose, this newsletter. We got some limited feedback. The Steering Committee acted. And the membership said, "we have a better idea." It was a better idea. The new name is an improvement over the old new name. Members worked together, in the one face-to-face opportunity we have, to make an important decision. And we came up with a dynamic and descriptive name for ourselves. Democracy sure is sloppy but it beats the alternatives. ■

*– Fred Newdom*

# MARCH OF THE AMERICAS

October 1, 1999: Opening Rally  
Lafayette Park, Washington DC

Comments by Mary Bricker-Jenkins

Bertha Capen Reynolds Society/Social Welfare Action Alliance

**M**y name is Mary Bricker-Jenkins and I have been a social worker for 35 years. I was one of hundreds hired in January of 1964 by the New York City Department of Welfare to implement the 1962 Defined Services Amendments to the Social Security Act of 1935. We were told to go to our clients on welfare Aid to Families with Dependent Children – with offers of support to help them achieve self-sufficiency: childcare, transportation, job training and placement, and the like. Those who could eagerly accepted those services and many left the welfare rolls. But the millions spent on these services did not end poverty.

Since then, we have spent *billions* of dollars on similar services and supports. Those who could lined up for them, sometimes in lines stretching around the block. I have seen work-related programs come and go – all of them looking very much like today's – except that today we tell people that they won't work to get off welfare unless they're forced to – and poverty is still with us.

Our sisters and brothers in the "Twelve Step" programs have a definition of insanity that is far more useful than anything in the DSM-IV. They say that insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. By this definition, "welfare reform" as we know it is not a sane policy – at least not if it is any way intended to help most people out of poverty.

A *sane* policy would be based on what we know: that poverty is not caused by the characters of poor people, but by the *greed* of the rich buttressed by the *fear* of those who allow this insanity because we are afraid to challenge the real causes of poverty.

Social workers – because of our training – know that poverty is a *social* condition that requires a *social* movement to challenge it and end it. We can end poverty in this country.

There is enough to go around. Day by day social workers are reawakening to these facts and to the possibilities they signal. We do not have to manage poverty; we can work to end it. We can work not to end welfare, but to end *poverty*. We can join this movement to end poverty, organized and led by poor people, which grows today.

As a colleague and I were on our way to this rally this morning a young man saw our "movement" T-shirts and asked if we were social workers or activists. "Is there a difference?" he asked. "Well, there shouldn't be," he answered. Exactly so. We can erase the line between social worker and activist, to become allies of the poor, homeless and unemployed who have organized this march and this movement. I want to tell you about two things that happened last weekend that give me hope that we are erasing that line.

First, the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, which I represent here today, changed its name. BCRS is a social work organization that has always had economic justice at the center of its concerns and programs. But we changed our name to the "Social Welfare Activist Alliance" to underscore our commitment to *act* and particularly to *continue to act* in alliance with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union and the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign.

Second, the officers and board of

the National Association of Social Workers, the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, agreed to return from their meeting here in Washington to their regions and states and urge the NASW membership to support the March of the Americas. The Pennsylvania Chapter has already officially endorsed the march. As this march goes forward we are sure to see more and more evidence that social workers know what kinds of alliances we need to fulfill the mission and promise of the profession.

For we too are being undermined by these policies. I had a nightmare last night that underscored this and the need for our alliance. As a teacher of social work, I dreamed that I was handing to each graduating student a basket with a lifeline in it. Clearly, the lifeline represented the policies and programs we could pass to people in trouble or needing a little extra help. But I dreamed that when I went to the baskets to toss a line to someone reaching out for one, the lifeline had turned into snakes. That is often what we social workers have to offer today – mangled health care, inadequate child care, shelters instead of homes, homes with no furniture, jobs at poverty wages, "work activities" that, as we saw in a New York court decision yesterday, will deny people such rights as legal protection from sexual harassment. Snakes instead of lifelines.

Social work activists and allies need not be afraid of these snakes. We can cast them aside, drive them from the realm, and reweave the lifelines we all need as we work to build this movement led by people who know

*Continued on next page* ▶

## SWAA Listserv Revisited

In light of the name change, I am taking the opportunity to "start over" and would like all SWAA members and newsletter readers and recipients to send me your email address so that I can enroll you in the SWAA listserv. We would like as many folks to subscribe as possible as a way of cutting paper costs and increasing the speed of communications. The intention is not to replace other modes of communication, but rather to enhance our dialogue and use cyberspace technology as the progressive's "friend". OK, I know that sounds like BS but if you will send me your name and email and any affiliation (agency, school, organization or city), I'll send you info back about the new list. We will be using egroups.org as our listserv provider (rather than a university outlet). I look forward to a full email-box in the near future. ■

– Michel Coconis  
coconism@gvsu.edu

## **MARCH OF THE AMERICAS** (cont'd)

best about poverty – poor people themselves – but is our movement too.

I want to close with personal pledges to the marchers here today. To you who are living in poverty, I make this pledge: as long as this country criminalizes poverty, criminalizes your acts of survival, I will stand with you. I will be your “partner in crime.” To social workers who join this movement, I make this pledge: I will stand with you on our Code of Ethics that says we must not implement policies and programs that harm people. We can refuse to be the poverty police, the managers of mangled health care, the field bosses in a reconstituted system of indentured servitude. Together we can refuse and resist, and we can create ways to live our commitments to economic justice as we erase the line between “social worker” and “activist.”

### **March of the Americas Background Info:**

Poor and homeless families from all of the Americas, including families from Canada, the United States and Latin America marched from Washington, DC to the United Nations in New York City in a **March of the Americas: Continuing the March for Our Lives**. We marched 10 miles or more a day for 30 days, setting up Tent Cities every night, and holding press conferences and protests in local communities. We spoke to the effects of poverty and welfare reform, and sponsored tribunals and cultural events along the entire route. This month-long march brought together poor people from around the United States who are organizing for their survival. The March was also an effort to link up the struggles internationally against the inequities arising from globalization.

The March of the Americas was organized by the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, a network of over 40 poor people's organizations from across the U.S. The network expands from public housing residents facing the demolition of their housing in Chicago, to welfare recipients about to be cut off assistance in Philadelphia; from farm workers working for poverty wages in Florida to work fare workers organizing in San Francisco.

You can read much more about the

March of the Americas on the web at: <http://www.libertynet.org/kwru>  
For more information contact:  
Kensington Welfare Rights Union  
NUHHCE, ASFCME, AFL-CIO  
PO Box 50678  
Philadelphia, PA 19132-9720  
Phone: 215/203-1945  
Fax: 215/203-1950  
Email: [kwru@libertynet.org](mailto:kwru@libertynet.org)  
Web: <http://www.libertynet.org/kwru> ■

## **GET UP/STAND UP** (cont'd from page 3)

a mix of activists and academics from across the country as presenters and the point of all of them was to be interactive and engaging as we shared strategies. Titles ranged across a range of areas: *Learning Our Lessons From the Debacle Of Welfare Reform*; *The Assault On Immigrants Had Not Ended*; *Social Security As The Next “Reform”*; *I Am A Watermelon Seed*; *Exploring Poverty Through Metaphor*; *Building Bridges: Learning From Community/Labor Campaigns*; *Learning How To Walk Funny: Doing Radical Clinical Work And Teaching When You Have One Foot In The System*; *Remembering What The Right Is Still Up To*; and *Herpolitics/Herpractice: Feminist Politics And Social Welfare*.

An amazing example of how hard participants worked was that at 4:30, over 50 people still came together to discuss “Who was Bertha Reynolds, Why we Name Ourselves After Her and Why Change Our Name?” The group spent some lively time rethinking the name change and recommending suggestions for conversation on Sunday morning.

Our Friday evening plenary featured a conversation between the whole group and Adolph Reed, writer and Labor Party activist and Cheri Honkala from KWRU (who just made it after being just let out of jail for housing activism in Philadelphia). The conversation touched on important issues, but responses once again make us wonder whether a big session with speakers isn't a set-up for everyone – because there are just too many expectations to meet – or whether we might better spend the longest collective time we have together hearing state by state reports on activism and

assaults, along with some entertainment. Any ideas or suggestions will be much welcome by the Michigan planning group for next year.

Saturday featured a full program of workshops, a lively march and rally around welfare rights in Northampton, and an evening dance. There were too many workshops to name but they included continued discussion of Friday topics, plus attention to issues of health, mental health, gay rights, black radical politics, campus organizing, working with the media, the global economy, youth organizing, protecting the rights (and salaries) of human service workers in the “private” sector” and making links with faith based organizing.

Participant responses showed that folks were pleased with the workshops, although there was some important criticism of how little attention was paid to disability rights, and even how some of our speakers spoke in ways that perpetuated the problem. Point taken, and we will do this better next year.

Our policy of creating generic workshops that pooled similar proposals from different geographic areas drew both criticism and praise. Especially because the Planning Committee had not always done what it could to connect people in some of the workshops, the presentations sometimes felt too much like a potluck, and some presenters were frustrated that their focus was diluted. On the other hand, many respondents liked the mix and felt that it forced “more conversation and less presentation.” Again, next year's conference will learn from our experience, as we began to do in our final Sunday morning wrap-up.

As always, all agree that the best part of a “Bertha conference” is the people, the conversations and the sharing of questions and hopes. This year participants were especially energized by the breadth of people and the depth of political conversation that occurred. As one person said, “I felt that this conference fed me. I didn't feel alone and I learned from lots of folks who were fighting the fight in lots of different ways, all over the country. We all need this – it's the only way to build a movement that knows what to do. ■

# "We must, first of all, know that we have allies"

— By Michael A. Dover

**W**hen Bertha Capen Reynolds, pioneer of progressive social work, wrote those words in August 1950, the world anti-fascist alliance had collapsed. The left was under attack in the unions, the courts, and the professions, including social work. Yet Bertha Reynolds insisted that the great majority of the American people could be won over to defending the interests of humanity, and that trade unions would come to the defense of workers across lines of color and creed.

On October 24, several members of SWAA, including Jennifer Filipovich, the Membership Chair of SWAA, attended an event which was true to the spirit of the kinds of alliances which Bertha Reynolds was confident would once again be forged. The event, the Second Annual Frederick Douglas/Eugene Debs Awards Dinner, was sponsored by Democratic Socialists of America. The bulk of the several hundred people present were from dozens of locals from the UAW, AFSCME, and other AFL-CIO unions, including UAW Local 6000, representing workers at the Family Independence Agency of the State.

In addition to D.S.A. members, also present were members of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, the Labor Party, and other groups on the left. Among the co-chairs was Maryann Mahaffey of the Detroit City Council, a life member of the BCRS/SWAA. Another member, Milton Tambor of AFSCME, was also on the program.

The keynote speaker, Bill Fletcher Jr., Assistant to the President of the AFL-CIO, related a history which showed that Reynolds' confidence was not misplaced. On the one hand, Fletcher gave a rendition of the ways in which the labor movement, under the Cold War leadership of the previous decades, had fallen short and had in fact betrayed the very ideals of the song sung by all of us last night at

the closing of the event, "Solidarity Forever". He condemned the regressive aspects of the "social compact" between capital and labor during the Cold War. Now, he pointed out, "neoliberalism has no room for a public sector."

But the event of last night leaves me thinking that the pulse of the left and the civil rights movement and the labor movement are not only beating but quickening. For instance, Horace Small, a veteran African-American community organizer and National Director of DSA, sounded an alarm that we may be facing a real crisis should George Bush Jr. be elected.

After Reagan was elected, new social movements sprung into action: the anti-Apartheid movement, a re-invigorated peace movement; Central American solidarity movement, etc. But these movements didn't just happen; they were organized. Clearly, we need to begin to plan again for the struggles ahead.

This time, however, there are signs that should give us hope for renewed social movements. For one, there is a new labor movement. One led not by Cold Warriors, but by a member of Democratic Socialists of America, John Sweeney. One with a number of social workers and current and former SWAA members in its leadership at the local and national levels. One with an official, Bill Fletcher, Jr., who said: "The left must introduce forbidden words — words like class.... We should be promoting class consciousness... We desperately need the left... to help turn what is now a trade union movement into a labor movement!"

As another sign, it is significant that the two awardees were an African-American trade union leader and a life-long rank-and-file trade unionist and leftist: Nate Gooden, Region 1 Director of the U.A.W. and Saul Wellman. Saul is a lifelong trade unionist; veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil

War; Purple Heart recipient in World War Two, and a McCarthy-era Chairman of the Michigan Communist Party who was indicted and arrested under the Smith Act. Nate related his experiences fighting racism in the auto companies and in the union. A film clip related Saul's life of struggle.

After Maryann Mahaffey presented a City Council testimonial to him, Saul Wellman, 87, said: "I have always had a feeling I was never alone no matter where I was, because I was part of a great movement that would move us closer to a world where the exploitation of man by man would be eliminated — the movement for socialism."

It is significant that these forces of the left, the civil rights movement, and the labor movement, with the growing participation of women in their leaderships, could come together in an event like this. In calling for a summit of the labor movement, the left and social movements, Horace Small said: "We want to work with you... we want to work with everyone" who is serious about social change. Although the phrase "serious about social change" is true to the spirit of what Horace said, it is closer to a question the local SWAA chapter has been discussing. Are we serious about social change? Is social work serious about social change? Is the SWAA serious about social change? These are questions we clearly need to ask ourselves and pose to our fellow social workers and human service workers.

It is clear we need to open up our organization and the process of social service activism. Even talking about "left unity" is not enough, for the left itself is far too narrow. We also need to be talking about what Chicago social worker and activist Mildred Williamson refers to as "multiple identity politics," not just single identity politics. The majority of people have multiple identifications, and experience oppression and

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dehumanization in more than one way. This helps us to recognize that each of our movements needs the very allies about which Bertha Reynolds spoke.

It's great to talk about the need for a summit. The social work profession just had one, and SWAA was invited. If you ask me, rank-and-file social workers should demand even more unity amongst organizations concerned about social welfare. Why not have one weeklong event each year at which NASW, CSWE, SWAA and many other social service related organizations could have overlapping conferences and sessions?

But we also need a grassroots, rank-and-file alliance if we want to be successful in catalyzing change. Perhaps this is how we should be conceiving of our own national conferences; as opportunities to build the national SWAA and to convene a statewide chapter or coalition of chapters of the SWAA in each state where there is a national conference and meeting. But also as opportunities to ally with existing coalitions and form new coalitions that can be truly effective forms of social welfare action.

In order to do this, we must recognize that we have allies. And we must find a way to sit down with them in advance in planning our activities. For instance, as Bill Fletcher said, referring to the central importance of the participation of African-American and other oppressed minority participation: "No discussion should happen unless we're represented."

All of this will take much work and effort. Luckily, there is clearly a new generation of young social service activists which is coming into the movement. If we can build an inter-generational movement, one which is serious about being interracial as well, we will be able to be serious about being an alliance. We will be able to demonstrate we are serious about social change. ■

## Remembering Susan Kinoy

(A copy of the Statement from Barbara Schram at Susan Kinoy's Memorial Service, 3/20/99)

When Peter asked me if I would speak at this memorial service I immediately said, of course! When you are a loving friend of a woman who has so many loving friends, with so many great Susan stories to tell, it is a very affirming invitation but a very daunting one, especially since I, like Susan, can be an enthusiastic non-stop talker. In fact when friends of mine from Massachusetts finally met my legendary buddy Susan, they wondered how one room, or car, or party, could contain both of us.

My impulse right after Peter asked me, was to tell about the passionate energy Susan showered on my kids, how she would sweep up my noisy little boy Joshua the minute we arrived at Block Island and rush him out to collect mussels or go fishing in her leaky boat ( leaving me, a harried single parent to take a quiet walk on the beach) or how she insisted on traveling to the Dominican Republic with me – against the express wishes of my repressive adoption agency who believed prospective parents would somehow offend the Dominican immigration officials, to learn about its culture, food and political situation before I adopted my youngest son Joaquin.

But Peter pointed out that when he looked over the roster of speakers, I was the only person on the agenda who represented the social work/radical parts of her life. So I won't go on about those precious personal memories.

I met Susan over thirty years ago at the height of the civil rights era. Michael Schwerner had just been brutally murdered in Mississippi and Susan helped to create the Michael Schwerner fund to send social work students down south so that they could encounter first hand, the massive damage created by segregation, and try to be useful to the many strong local men and women who were fighting harsh economic deprivation. She spearheaded the Schwerner awards that recognized local fighters for social equity and justice.

When I first encountered her on the Schwerner board of directors, Susan was already deeply involved in supporting the campaigns of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party down south and the National Welfare Rights Organization up south.

All through the years since that time, Susan's professional work as community organizer and teacher and her volunteer activities seamlessly blended. Chairing a never ending round of meetings at home and traveling out of the country as a member of brigades and delegations, she joined in the struggles for the rights to self determination of the Cubans, Grenadians, Nicaraguans and Salvadorans abroad and the rights to decent services for the disenfranchised, especially the elderly, in our own backyards.

But Susan was never a self-righteous or ideological radical. She cared about individual people too much for that to ever happen. In Grenada we played wild games of *Boggle* with a local young revolutionary and she taught us in return how to cook Calalu stew, In Nicaragua we danced at an old age home and feasted on roast pork with families at a beach which we found by absolute accident following directions in ever widening circles in our miserable Spanish. In Cuba we participated in the joyous wedding of a dear friend and Susan wove a wonderful garland of wild flowers for the bride to wear. And everywhere we wrote poems with outrageous rhymes that would have made Ogden Nash blush.

Just as Emma Goldman is reputed to have said, Susan also declared, "If I can't dance, (or play poker, or laugh loud and long) I don't want your revolution". So right now in that special place where old revolutionaries meet and plot, Emma and Susan are doing one hell of a dance. ■

# CHAPTER UPDATES:

**Ann Arbor:** The Ann Arbor chapter of the SWAA completed a number of projects during the past semester and are taking on new challenges for the upcoming year.

Last winter, the chapter helped Deborah Bey get her Earned Income Tax Credit project off the ground. BCRS members helped locate free tax consultation service in southeastern Michigan, created a pamphlet that briefly described the EITC in both English and Spanish, and got students to take the pamphlets back to their field experience agencies to disseminate them to clients.

The chapter members also constructed a magnificently weighty "Free Speech Bulletin Board" out of lumber for use in the new School of Social Work building. This bulletin board was placed in the Commons but was later moved to the basement. After a bit of sparring with the powers that be in the School, the bulletin board was painted and placed outside the entrance to the library where it remains today. This bulletin board will remain until a mobile board is put in the Commons.

A highly successful panel discussion was held in May concerning the NATO bombing in Kosovo. The panel was entitled "Stop the Humanity" and attracted a large crowd and a great deal of discussion.

The chapter is meeting weekly and planning two forums in November concerning the low wages and salary discrepancies within the social work profession and the role of social work in the political arena. The chapter is busy planning for the upcoming annual conference to be held in Michigan. We also held a potluck in October that drew many new students and faculty members.

**Kalamazoo:** Our organization has focused this fall on this year's City election. During the month of September, we pushed an on-campus voter registration drive, and registered nearly 300 students. In October, our focus was on the Don Cooney Campaign, as our dedicated advisor and social work professor is running for reelection. We

organized a fundraiser in September that raised over \$2,000 for the campaign, and in October we walked the neighborhoods distributing literature and calling registered voters every night. We joined together with several other student organizations to put together a Meet the Candidates night and had a great turnout. Finally, during the last week before elections, we held a rally on campus for Don. Don spoke at the rally and we had music and lots of social justice spirit!

In the beginning of the month, we had our annual Peace Week which included presentations on the Living Wage, Minorities and the Media, and Kim Moody from Labor Notes who led a discussion on organized labor. Our most powerful event during Peace Week was a presentation by Charles Kernaghan (Director of the National Labor Committee, sponsor of the Peoples Right to Know Campaign) on The Dark Side of Globalization: Sweatshops and Child Labor. Over 300 people came, and out of this event formed the Kalamazoo Chapter of United Students Against Sweatshops. Headed by two ambitious leaders, this organization is off to a flying start and we are so excited! In November, we will again be working on the Oxfam Day of Fast for World Hunger and the Hunger Banquet. We also worked with the Native American Student Organization to put together a program on Leonard Peltier in November.

**ELECTION UPDATE: Don Cooney was reelected onto the Kalamazoo City Commission for the 1999-2001 term. Congratulations, Don!**

**Rochester, New York:** Rochester is now ready to declare itself a Chapter, although some of us have been "unofficially" operating as a Chapter for quite some time. Last June, we worked as part of the Rochester Poor People's Coalition to bring Willie Baptist and Liz Theo Harris to town for a two-day Human Rights Organizing School. This event was very successful, featuring a potluck dinner and video showing of "Outriders," as well as a

daylong organizing school the following day. Over thirty people attended each day.

In September – again as part of the Poor People's Coalition – we organized a march through one of the poorest sections of the City and put up a "mini" Tent City that same night to protest homelessness and poverty in the community.

October was devoted to successful fund-raising (with participation from Social Work students at SUNY Brockport), which resulted in our being able to send two poor people from the Coalition to New Jersey for the final days of the March of the Americas. One of our members drove a van down for the final weekend of the March, taking four SUNY Brockport Social Work students with her.

Our members continue to work closely with the House of Mercy, a human service organization (and homeless shelter) that has been very supportive of (and involved in) efforts to organize low-income people in our community.

**Southern California:** The Southern California Chapter of SWAA has made remarkable programmatic strides. Over the summer we developed a committee structure and are now reaping the benefits. After five years and many successful events including annual workshops and educational programs, we identified three major areas of interest and developed committee for each.

The School Committee is working with the local departments and schools of social welfare to heighten the role of advocacy and social action in the curriculum. We designed an addition to the First Year Learning Agreement that requires students to connect their client population to a policy issue at the local, state, or national level. A packet of materials gives the rationale for this and a detailed plan of how to do it. The plan is based on Nancy Amidei's "So You Want to Make a Difference." UCLA is the pilot school and there is support and interest in the plan at CSULA, USC and CSULB. This is a work in progress. There will be evaluation forms for Field Instructors,

*Continued on next page* ▶



## CALL TO ESTABLISH THE BERTHA CAPEN REYNOLDS SOCIETY

(From the Archives: As we transition into our new name, it seemed appropriate to revisit the original "call to join" of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society....)

Over the past ten years, the social workers have begun to acknowledge and reaffirm the rich heritage left to us in the work of Bertha Capen Reynolds. 1985 was the centennial celebration of her life, 1885-1978.

The Bertha Reynolds Centennial Committee, convened by Jack Kamaiko, honored her through events held by the American Orthopsychiatric Association and the Smith College School of Social Work. Since her death in 1978, she has also been honored by the Council on Social Work Education, and NASW has re-issued three of her books in its Classics Series.

Through these activities, which involved hundreds of elder, midlife and young social workers, Bertha Capen Reynolds' work has been restored to its rightful place as a twentieth century social work achievement.

Bertha Reynolds' abiding commitment to humanistic practice methods, fundamental social change, and the scientific study of society today serves as an inspiration to social workers who wish to revive, foster and continue the progressive tradition in social work.

As the political and fiscal crisis in the national human service community continues virtually unabated, those of us who share in Bertha Reynolds' vision of a caring society are compelled to call upon our colleagues to find a way to deepen our political understanding and practice of social work in order to redirect national

priorities toward the meeting of human needs.

Toward this end, an informal gathering of fifty social workers attending the Bertha Reynolds Centennial Conference in Northampton, Massachusetts on June 30, 1985 explored a new effort toward clarifying our political analysis of society and our profession and developing alternative visions and strategies for the future. In the resulting Call to Establish the Bertha Reynolds Society, over 150 social workers, young and old, national prominent and locally active, endorsed the formation of such a Society. A founding meeting was held in Chicago, Illinois on November 8, 1985, in conjunction with the NASW Symposium.

Ten evolving principles and objectives for the Society were presented in the Call and amended in Chicago, where the 75 social workers present voted unanimously to reissue this Call to Join the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society.

1. To promote the study and practice of the progressive tradition in social welfare and social work.
2. To further communication, cooperative support, and collaboration between and among social work practitioners, social service workers, scholars, and clients, thereby reducing the gap between theory and practice.
3. To further the scientific study of

society and social work by developing a critique of the nature of social welfare, social services, social work and social problems.

4. To develop and work on agendas for alternative social policies aimed at incremental and fundamental social change.
5. To clarify the requirements and methods of humanistic direct practice aimed at facilitating both individual and social change through advocacy, transformation, and empowerment.
6. To stimulate exchanges among employed, retired, and student social workers of diverse backgrounds to generate activism around social service and social policy issues.
7. 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.
8. To expose and oppose the nature and effects of racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, and discrimination against the disabled and the psychologically distressed.
9. To promote the mission and methods of progressive social work by facilitating the presentation, publication and distribution of papers, books, and monographs and by stimulating research and contributions to professional and progressive publications, including those of feminist, Marxist, and anti-racist perspectives.
10. To educate members of the human service community about the life and work of Bertha Capen Reynolds.

The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society will enable social workers to heighten our understanding of our roles and to become more effective and active in our agencies, unions, schools, communities, and in NASW and other professional organizations.

We, the undersigned, call upon our colleagues to join us in building a lasting organization, which can further the historical and urgently needed progressive tradition in social work.

(A revised version of the original Call issued August 7, 1985, this Call to Join was issued November 1985 following the founding meeting.) ■

## CHAPTER UPDATES (cont'd)

Field Liaisons and students and the material will be revised over the summer for broader use in the fall. If you would like a copy of our materials, call or e-mail Mary Brent Wehrli at (310) 825-1480, mbwehrli@ucla.edu.

The Social Action Committee has as its goal the ability to reach all of our local members via phone/e-mail tree and web page. These technologies will be used to alert us to events we would want to support. Such as marches, conferences, workshops, petitions, boycotts, etc. We have supported many local campaigns and have tabled at four

major events over the past few years – selling BCRS books and handing out our brochures. This will increase our ability to respond in a timely manner and in greater numbers.

The Agency Committee is looking at the impact of privatization on health care and has designed a survey, which is going to be sent to ten counties for their response.

We also just added a new committee: Publications, which will be responsible for writing and reviewing articles for our chapter. ■

# REFLECTIONS: Narratives of Professional Helping

## SPECIAL ISSUE: Call for Narratives

### Responding to War: Social Workers and War In the Balkans

Co-Editors: Michael A. Dover, M.S.W.; Charles D. Garvin, Ph.D.; Sara Amy Goodkind, M.S.W.; Marilyn Moch, Ph.D.; Michael S. Reisch, Ph.D.

During the 1999 war in Yugoslavia, social workers in the U.S. and in Yugoslavia struggled to find ways to carry out professional, humanitarian and political activities at the same time as bombs were falling, people were being killed, families were being driven from their homes, and hundreds of thousands were fleeing the horror of war. The 1999 war followed a series of civil wars and armed conflicts which have taken place in the Balkans during this decade.

The 1999 war produced profound disagreement amongst social workers. Some social workers actively protested NATO bombing while others supported international action to bring a stop to the atrocities and still others engaged actively in social work and other humanitarian activities. The earlier conflicts also resulted in substantial international social work activity in the Balkans as well as the involvement of social workers from the region.

This special edition seeks to give voice to the reflections of social workers who responded professionally or politically to the 1999 war and the previous conflicts, as well as the accounts of those who have witnessed the terrible suffering in the region.

#### Narratives:

- Narratives and accounts by social workers of their political views and activism during the 1999 war, including how their responses to previous wars affected their present involvement.
- Experiences of social workers who have directly participated in refugee relief, victims services, and other social work-related activity in the Balkans over the past decade.
- Submissions from social workers working for peace, non-violent conflict resolution, and community development in the Balkans.
- Activities of social workers involved in providing services for and raising funds on behalf of victims of bombing, forced relocation, rape and murder.
- Narratives about ways in which the shadow of war impacted upon practice in settings both close to and far removed from the war itself.
- Witness reaction from the violence of the 1999 war and the other conflicts in the Balkans and how the violence and forced relocation has affected the people of the region.

**Manuscripts are due by 12/15/1999.**

#### Additional Information:

The manuscripts are being prepared for a Special Issue scheduled for Publication Spring 2000. Both lengthy narratives and shorter accounts will be accepted. Shorter accounts may be consolidated in a special section of "mini-narratives". The editors welcome suggestions as to social workers, human rights advocates and refugee relief workers from North America, the Balkans and elsewhere whose experiences would make them valuable contributors to this special issue.

We welcome submissions from persons of all nationalities, but given the impending deadline of 12/15 for submissions and a Spring 2000 publication date, we are unable to make arrangements for translations into English.

However, the editors welcome submissions written in a language other than English and translated by the author or collaborators, but which require further editing for style and usage prior to publication.

The editors will consider narratives written under a pen name following confirmation of actual identity of the author.

**Mail Manuscripts to:** Editors, Reflections Special Section  
University of Michigan, School of Social Work  
1080 S. University Ave.  
Ann Arbor MI 48109-1106

## An exciting new documentary from Skylight Pictures... **OUTRIDERS**

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For more information about "Outriders" go to [www.libertynet.org/kwru](http://www.libertynet.org/kwru)

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- Please forward all contributions for the next *BCR Reports* to:
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- E-mail: [berthabk@aol.com](mailto:berthabk@aol.com)
- (E-mail submissions are preferable)
- FAX: 716-395-2366
- 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 **March 15, 2000.**

## SWAA Book Fund Submission Policy

1. Author must be an active SWAA member.
2. Author must have presented at a SWAA regional or national conference.
3. Author will negotiate with their publisher for the best discounted purchase price.
4. Books will be sold to active SWAA members at a discount from the list price.
5. Only paperback or "reasonably priced" hardcover books with general distribution potential will be considered.
6. Submissions will be considered yearly by January 31st.

Forward submission requests to:

Laura Walther  
c/o SWAA Book Fund  
Columbus Circle Station  
P.O. Box 20563  
New York, New York 10023

## RESPONSE TO BOOK REVIEW

In response to the book review of my book, *Social Welfare: A World View* (Wadsworth, 1997) in the May edition of *BCR Reports*, I'd like to add a few points. While Marilyn Moch's comments were sound regarding the neglect of the issues of power and control in the opening chapters, this book – as one of my students (business major) so astutely put it – "sees socialism as a solution for everything." The viewpoint is feminist/pacifist/socialist and informed by my civil rights and peace activism in the U.S. as well as my work in Northern Ireland. For social welfare programs, I look to Norway where I worked for two years. The history chapter devotes several pages to the life and teachings of Bertha Reynolds, drawing on primary sources. These are some of the things I wanted fellow members of the Bertha Reynolds Society to know.

– Katherine van Wormer

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