

BCR REPORTS

A Publication of the
Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

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WHO ARE SOCIAL WORKERS FOR JUSTICE? WE ARE!

The last issue of the *BCR Reports* announced that, for reasons spelled out in that article, we are in the process of changing our name to one that describes us in a way that anyone could gather what we're about.

After lengthy deliberation and some suggestions from members, we agreed to present SOCIAL WELFARE WORKERS FOR JUSTICE (SWWJ) to the members as our new name. There will continue to be a reference to the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society in our materials but we will be making our formal transition at the annual conference at Smith College in June.

SWWJ represents our recognition that there is a need to place ourselves as the radical voice among those working within the welfare state. Similarly to the National Lawyers Guild and the Union of Radical Political Economists, we felt that it was critical that our name reflect our relationship to the welfare state. As well, we wanted to make explicit our commitment to a membership that is broader than the social work profession and to the goal around which we have come together.

There was also a recognition that the new name has an identity and a link to previous efforts to create organizations dedicated to a radical vision of social services, articulated by those who work within that arena. From the Rank and File Movement of the 1930s to the Radical Alliance of

Social Service Workers and the Social Welfare Workers Movement of the 1960s, we have attempted to present an alternative to the business-as-usual, credential-oriented, exclusionary practices of the mainstream social work and social welfare organizations. BCRS claimed that tradition and now is ready to move on and claim a name that identifies it to the world.

While all of us joined the BCRS because of what the organization stands for, many of us – myself among them – were drawn to a name that identified a pivotal figure in the history of social work's struggle to articulate a radical vision of society while working within a field that has had an ambivalent relationship, at best, to that vision. We were comforted by the recognition that Bertha would probably have been tremendously uncomfortable with an organization named after her and that she would have wanted us to say who we are with great clarity. Our respect for Bertha Reynolds' life, work and ideas provides us with the courage and impetus to make this change after a dozen years of doing Bertha's work in her name. Join with us as we move forward – the same wonderful energy and ideas in a newly and proudly named organization. ■

– Fred Newdom

CALL FOR COMMITTEE COORDINATORS!

The Bertha Capen Reynolds Society is in need of Committee Coordinators for two committees:

- Mobilization Committee: Inform and mobilize members and coalitions for nationally coordinated rallies, lobbies, fund-raising, and solidarity work.
- Organizing Committee: Assist in chapter organization and activities.

Use your talents and skills (not to mention all that free time!) to build and strengthen the power and abilities of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society. Please contact Jennifer Filipovich at jmfilipovich@hotmail.com ■

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

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(E-mail submissions are preferable)

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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 **July 15, 1999**.

COMMODIFICATION AND THE STATE OF MANAGED CARE

Traditional assumptions about health care are inapplicable in for-profit managed care settings, in which professional providers are employees, case managers (usually with inferior credentials) are employee supervisors, and health care institutions have become profit-driven corporations. Those seeking treatment assume a comparably altered status. While perhaps still deemed "patients," they are now better designated as care recipients whose "case management" often bears little resemblance to patient-provider relationships that once rested on trust and mutual respect.

Overall, then, managed care is best construed as yet another phase in the ongoing commodification of American society. In this it resembles the counterpart commodification of, say, higher education, in which the commodities are ever more efficiently produced and impersonally delivered course products (or at least credits) aimed at enhancing the commodity value of enrollee labor power.

But commodification in higher ed has progressed only fitfully, in part because of the fading but still obstructive legacy of academic humanism. Commodification of health care has of course advanced much further, partly because this sector has always been relatively entrepreneurial, but mostly because its profit potential is so much more immediately apparent. Indeed, once corporate payers became sufficiently alarmed about runaway health care costs, it was inevitable that corporate players, notably insurance companies and newly organized health corporations, would seek to cash in by offering managed care as an alternative to traditional fee-for-service (FFS) medicine.

The Clinton Administration's ill-fated Health Security Act (HSA) would have created a formally structured environment to promote stability and competitiveness in the new industry. In this it resembled

another major federal initiative, the FCC Act of 1934, which was essentially a response to ensure the viability of the newly emergent broadcasting industry by creating an appropriate regulatory framework. Broadly following James O'Connor's line of argument, both the FCC Act and the HSA sought to facilitate capital accumulation under the legitimizing rubric of the "public interest" – in the HSA's case, by promising to extend coverage to the uninsured population of thirty-six (now forty-six) million.

Yet there were key differences between the HSA and the earlier legislation. In particular, because it was self-evidently in the corporate interest, the FCC Act faced relatively little organized opposition. In contrast the HSA was acutely vulnerable to corporate attack, largely because its complex organizational schema made it virtually unintelligible to the average citizen. The first blow was struck by the insurance industry's trade organization, the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA), which funded the "Harry and Louise" television commercials. This *coup de theatre* was then followed by the *coup de grace* administered by other corporate interests upset by the tax implications inherent in enrolling nearly forty million previously uninsured citizens. In O'Connor's terms, the costs of legitimization exceeded the benefits to accumulation, so that the HSA was dead on arrival.

What emerged in its wake is arguably the worst of all possible worlds: a disjointed health care-government complex akin to its military-industrial counterpart in fostering wasteful societal dependence on the private sector. Thus, some fifteen million Medicaid recipients are already enrolled in managed care plans, while about forty percent of the same population receives at least partial HMO service. Six million of the thirty nine million Medicare participants are likewise HMO subscribers, with formal projections multiplying that number

several times over the next decade. The private-public sector connection is rendered even more intricate by use of private contractors to process Medicare payment claims and state retention of independent brokers to negotiate Medicaid contracts.

As Seymour Melman pointed out decades ago, the military-industrial complex had already become structurally indispensable. The same may now be true of the government-health care complex, perhaps already grown so powerful as to be virtually beyond all but cosmetic reform. In a pattern reminiscent of its military-industrial counterpart, public money is funneled into health care corporations heavy in supervisory paperwork and comparatively light in operational results. Thus, according to an authoritative 1995-96 Kaiser Commission study, many Medicaid recipients experienced the same or worse access to care under managed care as under the old FFS arrangement. Financial shenanigans generic to military contracting may also be achieving new heights (or depths) as the private-public relationship grows closer. In July, 1998, for example, the HHS Inspector General reported that the government had overpaid HMOs by \$1 billion in 1994, \$1.3 billion in 1995, and \$1.9 billion in 1996. But this is small change compared to outright Medicare fraud, which runs into the many billions each year.

In the making, then, is a variation on O'Connor's famous "fiscal crisis of the state," especially in the Medicare case, where the state is entrapped between a powerful electoral constituency of seniors and their families and a comparably formidable corporate segment ostensibly servicing that constituency. The result is political deadlock and programmatic instability. Just recently, for example, a number of the largest health care corporations announced strategic withdrawals from both the Medicaid and Medicare programs on grounds that allegedly inadequate returns did not justify continued operations in those markets. In the latter case, as many as four hundred forty thousand Medicare

recipients are to lose managed care coverage early in 1999.

The legitimization-accumulation conundrum is even more dramatically illustrated by the breakdown of the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare. In reality, the Commission was ferociously partisan. Its Republican majority plumped for a *de facto* voucher system that would probably have saddled sicker and poorer Medicare recipients with increased premium costs, while proliferating new HMO choices for the wealthier and healthier. Much to their credit, the Democratic minority successfully resisted this corporate-supported onslaught, but offered no new ideas of its own, other than a feeble effort to control drug prices. The deadlock between the social forces of legitimation and accumulation was thus starkly revealed, leaving President Clinton (who astutely stood aloof from Commission politicking) to come up with his own alternative. With the voucher option presumably a dead letter, Clinton has little room to maneuver: he can neither raise taxes nor cap provider income – the two most obvious remaining alternatives – without risking devastating political fallout. Yet the president must act promptly if Medicare's financial viability is to be sustained.

While immensely important in its own right, the Medicare crisis is still only a representation of the urgent need to replace commodified medical care with a single payer system featuring aggregate national budgeting and regional planning for hospital construction and technological investment. These are the norms in virtually all other advanced countries and are indispensable if medical costs are to be effectively controlled. The political prerequisite for such a new system is a mass coalition of the medically disaffected, which could challenge the premise that the future belongs to managed care, and especially to for-profit HMOs.

In this regard it may be heartening to keep in mind Karl Polyani's thesis that it was the commodification of life

AFFILIA CALLS FOR PAPERS ON WOMEN AND THE NEW AMERICAN WELFARE

In 1996, Congress repealed the 1935 AFDC Program, known as Welfare, and ruptured the safety net for women and children. It was replaced by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (the TANF Program). It is now time to assess the consequences of this legislation and project actions to deal with those consequences.

Affilia seeks submissions for a **SPECIAL ISSUE** on this topic. We are interested in papers dealing with the effects of TANF on the lives of women and their children, the multiple impacts on the agencies that serve women and the changes created in the larger society. Papers must be written from a feminist perspective, putting women at the center of the analysis.

Send submissions to either:

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All submissions must be postmarked no later than Sept. 30, 1999.

We especially hope to receive submissions that chart courses of action for legislators, professionals and advocates who are concerned about the welfare of women and their families.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS:

Submissions must be typed, double-spaced and no more than a total of 20 pages. Five copies, with name of author(s) and other identifying information appearing *only* on a separate cover sheet. A separate page containing an abstract of 250 words or less. Written permission to reprint from the original publisher any quotation of length. Use the reference style specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. ■

under capitalism that ultimately precipitated creation of welfare state institutions outside the market system. In present circumstances, Polyani's argument implies replacement of managed care by a single payer system authentically responsive to the commonwealth. Once again democratic mobilization remains the last best hope of progressive change. ■

– by David Katz
Michigan State University

HOW TO ORGANIZE A BCRS CHAPTER:

"How to Organize a BCRS Chapter" organizing packets are available by contacting Anissa at Communication Services at (518) 463-3522, 8 Thurlow Terrace, Albany, NY 12203. The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletters, copy of by-laws, names of BCRS organizers from the Steering Committee who will help you, and much more! Allow 4 weeks for delivery. ■

A REVIEW — **SOCIAL WELFARE, A WORLD VIEW**

by **KATHERINE VAN WORMER**

(Nelson Hall, 1997)

Social workers, and several BCRS members in particular, have written insightful, exciting books on various aspects of social welfare policy (Abramovitz, Lord, and Rose on women; Blau and Wagner on homelessness; Withorn and Bertha herself on challenging the paradigm, among others). And though several policy writers try to push the envelope, we need a current *Industrial Society and Social Welfare* (Wilensky and Lebeaux), or a *Mimesis* (Auerbach). And why not by a social worker from a social welfare perspective? This book isn't quite there, but it has the vision, and a prodigious amount of relevant information.

Though Dr. Van Wormer concentrates on specific countries, she does not simply compare social welfare policies from various countries. As she states in her preface, such a comparison is not enough: we need to acquire an international, multi-cultural focus from which to look at social policy and practice. In her first two chapters, she is so broad in her use and explanations of the various concepts one can use in acquiring such a focus that she is difficult to follow. Both the ecosystems model she selects and her use of functional analysis seem divorced from the issues of power and control she also discusses. The problem with Dr. Van Wormer's opening chapters is that she tries to cover every concept and every writer she has found useful, but too often does so in scattered, jumbled, and even badly written sections. We do not get a built up, coherent theoretical approach we can use.

While the historical chapters following this discussion are adequate, the book hits its stride beginning with a discussion of poverty, continuing with "Care Through the Life Cycle", and on to "World Policy Issues", which discusses the oppression of marginalized populations, human rights and social justice, and sustainable development. Dr. Van Wormer is able to use her theoretical constructs to excellent effect in spite of the shortcomings of the opening chapters.

Her discussion of "Work and Family Welfare" illustrates how the book provides a broader view of the subject than current hot topic discussions usually consider. She reviews how writers have documented the economic, social, psychological, and moral functions of work, and the dysfunctions of unemployment. There are also strong economic and other functions of unemployment and low-skilled employment. Income maintenance policies can placate unemployed workers to remain quietly out of the workforce or can push them into it, as is now happening. Liberal policies allow for an otherwise unacceptably high level of unemployment or, during periods of high employment, stringent policies push the unemployed into the

workforce, where they reduce the power of other employed workers to demand increased wages and benefits. Van Wormer points out (and David Gil emphasizes), work, and the nature of one's work ("What do you do?") define one's role and status. Both status and role for the working class and these new low-end insecure "workers" are maintained by preventing training and education programs for those pushed into the workforce from welfare, thereby assuring their ongoing insecure status. Psychologically, both groups remain threatened and subservient.

Morally, "...people get more credit for 'slaving away' to support their families than for opting out of the work force" (p. 355). Since those on welfare opted out until pushed in (so goes the myth), then surely their moral inferiority can be uncovered under welfare reform. The popular media reinforces the 'misfit' status of welfare recipients now entering the work force by ferreting out 'reprehensible' cases among these new workers. *The Reader's Digest* and Diane Sawyer (ABC's *20/20*) are among those publicizing examples of welfare recipients working and continuing to receive welfare.

Sections on Work and the Global Economy, Free Trade Agreements and Competition, the continuing push to pay as little as possible for labor, and the international, gender, and racial implications of such policies provide the range of considerations within which "welfare reform" and other income maintenance and family service policies operate.

The first two chapters are probably too weak to be useful, the Index inadequate for the wide range of subjects and references, some current material needs to be added, and students might need additional guidance to understand some of the information and stories presented. Nevertheless, Dr. Van Wormer has written a substantial view of social welfare and social work from an international and economic perspective that contributes heroically (678 pages), and – for the most part – well. This text moves the teaching of social work from its current far too narrow focus to the front of the struggle for social and economic justice in a global context. Best of all, the book has wide margins to write in.

For a detailed Table of Contents, e-mail
katherine.vanwormer@UNI.edu ■

– Submitted by Marilyn Moch (Moch is the Commissioner for North America for the Human Rights Commission of the International Federation of Social Workers and has taught social welfare policy for many years as an adjunct professor at NYC schools while working in public welfare and worker empowerment programs.)

SOCIAL WORK RESISTANCE AGAINST TANF WELFARE REFORM

(A Position Paper Adopted by the Temple Depot –
Underground Railroad that can be found in original form on
the NASW web-site.)

According to the Preamble of the NASW *Code of Ethics*, the “mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of the vulnerable, oppressed, and those living in poverty.” Therefore, we believe social workers have a professional obligation to oppose any rule, regulation, or statute that sustains and heightens the oppression of vulnerable populations. Starting today, social workers must uphold this obligation by refusing to implement TANF/welfare reform policies.

More than ever, social workers must draw strength from the seven core values of the social work profession – service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. With these values in mind, social workers must continue to work to end all forms of oppression in society, especially poverty which oppresses both women and men of all ages, sexual orientations, religions, physical abilities, ethnicities, nationalities, and races.

As social workers, bound by the mission, values, and ethics of our profession we cannot support the implementation of this welfare reform legislation. When people are being harmed, degraded, and demeaned because of legislation and agency policies, the *NASW Code of Ethics* states that social workers “may engage in organized action...to improve services to clients.” Therefore, it is our obligation to become “conscientious objectors!” We must resist and refuse to implement the Personal Responsibility Act. To remain true to our profession, we must:

- refuse to cooperate with cutting welfare recipients’ benefits or taking them off the welfare roles without knowing that they have a job of their choosing with a livable wage.
- refuse to remove children from homes where the only supposed crime is poverty.
- demand affordable and adequate childcare, housing, and transportation.
- help people file appeals for benefits, assist them in getting legal services, and encourage them to join the Kensington Welfare Rights Union.

And most of all: Refuse to require people to subject themselves to circumstances we would not accept ourselves – We must call for Economic Justice! ■

– Jennifer Jones (Jones is an MSW student at Smith College School for Social Work who is doing a community project with Mary Bricker-Jenkins in Philadelphia. Jones participated in the March 3rd demonstration against welfare reform that was organized by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. The above is a copy of the speech that she gave at the demonstration).

SAVING AMERICA’S BEST PROGRAM

If someone were to rob you and then accuse you of not having enough money, you would be outraged. Yet that is what is happening to the Social Security system, except that the system does have enough money for now and for many years to come. Its problems, partly due to this theft, lie down the road, and they are solvable, despite the shrill cries of its opponents who want to junk America’s best program.

The Social Security Fund was raided by President Johnson and later presidents to pay for the Vietnam War, Star Wars, the Savings and Loan debacle, and other misadventures. If there is a problem, it is a problem of war spending and of reckless banking practices, not of Social Security expenditures. The Social Security Fund and other funds have been raided for over 1/2 trillion dollars to date. Here are the reserves that the Social Security Trust Fund has built up:

1989	\$163 billion;
1990	\$226 billion;
1994	\$436 billion;
1995	\$483 billion;
1996	\$550 billion.

And here are the reserves estimated for the near future:

2010	over \$1 trillion;
2018	\$2.8 trillion;
2020	\$3.3 trillion.

There are simple ways of fixing the long range (75-year) financing problem of Social Security:

- (1) Stop the federal Government from raiding the Social Security Fund. Keep the Fund separate from the federal budget. State and local governments keep their pensions separate from their budgets, many by state law.
- (2) Nearly 4 million state and local government workers are not now covered by Social Security. Bring all newly hired ones into the Social Security system.
- (3) Remove the \$68,400 cap on income taxed by Social Security so that the rich would pay Social Security tax on ALL their income, as they do now for Medicare. There are over 800,000 taxpayers reporting income of \$200,000 or more. Removal of the cap would generate more than \$80 billion annually, more than enough **BY ITSELF** to cover the amount needed to make up the difference needed to balance long range financing (about \$77 billion annually).

This country is already a nation of gamblers, with casinos, State lotteries, keno machines, etc. Stock markets in both Japan and Hong Kong have lost more than 50% of their value. If Social Security were privatized and if we experienced a bear market similar to Japan’s and Hong Kong’s, millions of Americans would face destitution during their retirement years. We should not play roulette with people’s future.

Now that the election is over, Congress and the President will try to “save” Social Security by destroying it. We must not let that happen. ■

– by Marvin Mandell

Get Up/Stand Up and Create Alliances for Economic Justice at the Northampton National Conference June 25-27, 1999

Now is the time for Bertha members to begin to publicize the upcoming conference. The Program Brochure will be coming to you very soon, but even now you can talk to folks you know about it. We are trying to build on the energy from last year in Houston and bring in activists, academics, students and practitioners to talk and learn together about how people are already organizing, strategizing and creating alliances for justice. We have lined up an exciting program, now we need our members to talk up the event and get people there.

The major goals for the conference will be to inform ourselves and make connections for action about how people are organizing and mobilizing for economic and social justice around the country – around workers' rights, welfare reform, privatization, managed care, social security protection, immigrants rights and a range of other issues.

We will be finding creative ways of learning and acting together, with the goal always to engage with, not just to listen to each other. Both Friday and Saturday will feature a set of workshops on the organizing and strategic issues raised by welfare and immigration reform, by social security changes and managed care realities – with a unifying theme of how to build alliances that include activists across the struggles. In addition, some of the workshops on related topics that give us a chance to think about cross cutting issues are:

Facing economic realities; Popular education and political action; If there's one thing we did right, it was the day we started to fight (about organizing); Beyond reacting: alternative strategies for the changes we really want; Diversity as a Resource for Connections; Talking Union; I am a Watermelon Seed: Exploring Poverty through Metaphor; Coming out as a radical in social welfare work; Learning from community/labor campaigns; Linking politics, policy and practice; Defending ourselves: remembering the Right; Herpolitics/ Herpractice: feminist politics and social welfare; Fighting the mental stigmas of mental illness; Health Rights: grasping the potential; Gay rights are human rights: linking the struggles; The politics and potential for a black radical politics today; creating a Listening Project; Campus-based organizing; Changing the media; Increasing misery: the effects of the global economy; Youth organizing; Staying alive: ways social activists can support each other; Community/University connections for change; Faith and justice based organizing to prevent moral meltdown.

Besides bringing yourselves and others to the conference we need members to help us raise money for scholarships for the many low income activists who will be attending. The conference looks especially exciting because so many folks who are in the trenches plan to attend, but we need money to help this happen. If you or your chapter could raise money for this it will help a lot.

By the way, we are planning music and a Saturday afternoon action in Northampton as other ways to keep us standing up for justice.

For more information about any of this contact Fred Newdom (address and phone number in the Steering Committee list of this newsletter). ■

Ingrid Washinawatok El Issa Murdered

Ingrid Washinawatok El Issa (Menominee Indian), of the Indigenous Women's Network, was murdered, along with Lahe'ena'e Gay of the Pacific Cultural Conservancy International and Terence Freitas, a biologist from California, as they tried to assist the small Uwa tribe in their battle to preserve their land from oil exploration in Colombia, S.A. The three were kidnapped February 25, 1999, tied and blindfolded, taken across the river to Venezuela and killed that day or shortly thereafter. It appears that while guerrilla troops killed them, all sides in the area had an investment in continuing the drug trade which was threatened by outside publicity.

Ingrid was an opening plenary speaker at the 1992 International Social Work Forums in New York City, the US preliminary conference to the 1992 IFSW conference in Washington, D.C. At this multicultural event, she represented the American Indian Community House in New York, and her friendship, assistance, and advice since then kept the connection between the indigenous community and social workers close. When the United Nations launched the Decade of the American Indian, Ingrid Washinawatok was selected as the chair, a position she kept for its first two years.

At the International Forums, she said, "We talk about how much (of the natural resources) the indigenous people sit on in southern Africa, in Australia, and in the United States. We talk about how the roads in Canada go north and south, they don't go east and west. All the resources that are extracted from Canada are brought down here so that the people here benefit. We begin to make connections and begin to understand why we are being targeted. We have to make the connections. And we're making them.... We also have to take the risks to make sure that we survive as a people. All of us. The people, plural. Things happen for a reason. We're all trying to survive the best way we know how. But is it going to be a destructive survival, or is it going to be a positive survival? That is what we are working on." ■

BCRS Book Fund Submission Policy

1. Author must be an active BCRS member.
2. Author must have presented at a BCRS regional or national conference.
3. Author will negotiate with their publisher for the best discounted purchase price.
4. Books will be sold to active BCRS 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 BCRS Book Fund
241 West 100th Street #2R
New York, New York 10025

WORTH READING

Illusions of Prosperity: America's Working Families in an Age of Economic Insecurity, by Joel Blau, Oxford, 1999.

In *Illusions of Prosperity*, Blau launches a far-reaching assault on the idea that "the market" knows best. He writes that while the share of the national income held by the bottom four fifths of the population has continued to decline, the top fifth gained 97 percent of the increase in total household income between 1979 and 1994. Blau looks at recent reforms in NAFTA, education, job training, welfare and much more, showing that the new social policies have made matters worse, because reforms that rely on the market can't compensate for the market's deficiencies. Instead, he calls for a stronger, more caring government to counter the debilitating effects of the market, and he urges the development of the broadest possible alliances to ensure economic security. Faith in the free market has become a basic tenet of public policy debate. But Blau demonstrates that so-called "free market" programs have been a dismal failure, heightening inequality, lowering the median standard of living, and steadily eroding the quality of our social and political life. ■

BCRS National Steering Committee

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CHAPTER UPDATES:

Houston: BCRS has once again joined local chapters of ACORN, SEIU, and Houston NOW to revisit the possibility of rebuilding a coalition to conduct another Living Wage Campaign. At present, we are having preliminary discussions about the best way to pull a diverse, effective coalition together and the possible strategies necessary to overcome the hurdles we faced in our last Living Wage fight.

If other BCRS chapters have been active in Living Wage Campaigns around the country – especially if the Campaigns were successful – we'd love to hear from you and what you've learned. Send an email to scollins@uh.edu.

Kalamazoo: During the summer of 1998 we got involved in a new organization called the Kalamazoo Living Wage Coalition. Modeled after the larger US cities who have successfully implemented a living wage ordinance such as Chicago and Baltimore, this group sought to enact this ordinance which would require all companies that receive tax abatements from the City of Kalamazoo to pay their employees a living wage. After much research, the Coalition came up with a figure of \$8.25/hour to modestly support a family of three. Kalamazoo has a poverty rate of roughly 26% which is especially shameful in light of the fact that we only have a 5% unemployment rate. We've united with the Living Wage Coalition in the belief that those who are working full-time should be able to support themselves and live decently with the money they make and not live in poverty.

Throughout the fall, we held rallies around the Western Michigan University campus and the Kalamazoo community, raising awareness, empathy, and receiving over 1,000 signatures on our Living Wage Petition. We spoke at weekly City

Commission meetings, held forums and informational meetings. Finally, the City Manager agreed to conduct a study to determine if there really is a need for a Living Wage Ordinance in Kalamazoo. In late December, the City presented its Living Wage Report and Recommendations. It was decided that although the poverty rate is high in Kalamazoo, a Living Wage Ordinance would not be an effective catalyst due to the possibility that such an ordinance might drive away business. But the Living Wage Coalition did not take this as defeat; the City, having paid very little attention to the poor of Kalamazoo in the recent past, has finally acknowledged that this is a problem and we need to do something about it! Talk has now begun about a Poverty Reduction program and we are very excited to work with the City on this major problem that affects so many Kalamazoo residents.

In January, we brought Kim Bobo to Kalamazoo to speak on campus and work with our community on living wage strategies. Kim wrote a book called "Organizing for Social Change" and she works with the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice out of Chicago.

Missoula: The Missoula Chapter of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society continued with the project to match speakers with community organizations in the fall of 1998 and winter of 1999. The members compiled a list of speakers from a variety of organizations including the Living Wage Campaign, Women's Opportunity and Resource Development, and the University of Montana and then matched some of those speakers with audiences in the Missoula community. A speaker from the Coping with Block Grants project presented information on the impacts of welfare reform on families and community systems to a

social work intervention methods class, in an introductory social work class, and in a Human Behavior and Social Environment class, all at the University of Montana. Two Missoula BCRS members portrayed two famous social workers, Jane Addams and Bertha Capen Reynolds, in a historical narrative to another UM social work class. These presentations heightened students' awareness of important and often unrecognized figures in United States social work history and of the ramifications of newly implemented welfare reform measures on fellow students, citizens, and colleagues.

As a result of the interest generated by the BCRS speaker's bureau, the Jeannette Rankin Peace Resource Center invited the Missoula chapter to co-sponsor another community conversation and peace potluck. A group of six pregnant and/or parenting teenagers of the Futures Teen Pregnancy Panel presented their views and experiences from very personal standpoints. The panel members discussed their lives in frank and often emotional terms allowing the discussion participants an opportunity to find better understanding and empathy with the women and men of the panel. The teens also challenged assumptions about teen pregnancy and parenting and suggested ideas for change and real assistance.

The Missoula BCRS chapter also continued to hold video and book discussions on a monthly basis as a means of connection, support, and enjoyment for the members. In November, we discussed a darkly humorous collection of short stories by David Sedaris and in December watched a documentary entitled "Taylor's Campaign" concerning a formerly homeless man running for a city council seat on a platform supporting the rights and lives of Santa Monica's homeless population.

Members of the Missoula chapter gathered for discussions and planning for a community conversation on Social Security. Two members

Continued on next page ♦

DOING THE WORK – TRANSITIONS IN OUR LEADERSHIP

As you know, we are an entirely volunteer run organization – no paid staff, just a bunch of people willing to take on the hard work of sustaining the organization while carrying on the rest of their lives. We have been lucky over the years to have a core of dedicated members who have taken on key roles in BCRS and have helped us grow. Now, several of them have stepped down to pursue other important projects and we are fortunate that new people have stepped up to meet the responsibilities.

Longtime Treasurer Keith Kilty of Columbus, Ohio has left that role as of January 1st and Susan Collins of Houston is our new Treasurer. Keith continues as a Steering Committee member and as the webmaster of our website. Susan, a Steering Committee member and fresh from chairing last summer's successful conference in Houston, has agreed to take on this critical task. We are now up and running, with new bank accounts in Houston.

The BCRS Book Fund has, since our founding, been dedicated to bringing the works of Bertha Reynolds and other radical voices in the field to our members at discounted prices. Michael Cronin of New York City has been the Book Fund coordinator since we started and is now deeply immersed in doctoral studies. Laura Walther of Houston, who was our 1998 conference staff person, will be putting her impressive organizational skills to this new task, building our own *amazon.com*.

Our Membership Committee, under the leadership of Sharren Wells of Seattle and Fritz Naylor of Kalamazoo, MI, has coordinated membership outreach, renewals, record keeping and the many other tasks related to maintaining and promoting the organization. Both Sharren and Fritz have moved on to other projects and responsibilities and they are being replaced by Jennifer Filipovich of Missoula, MT and Carrie Coons Dalrymple of Somerville, MA. Jennifer will have responsibility for coordinating membership outreach and renewals, while Carrie will manage our data base and make sure that we know who and where our members are.

A new role in the organization, as we take advantage of the possibilities available through the internet technology, has been taken on by Michel Coonis of Grand Rapids, MI. She will setting up and managing our *LISTSERV*. This project is still in the development stages but we will be announcing its opening shortly.

Our appreciation goes out to Keith, Michael, Sharren and Fritz. You did important work for the organization and you did it well and with dedication. Thanks are due to Susan, Laura, Jennifer, Carrie and Michel for taking on such important jobs for all of us. We are only able to accomplish what we do because members are willing to assume leadership and to carry out their work within the political mission of the organization. ■

attended a workshop presented by fellow BCRS member Ken Grossinger concerning the present state and future of Social Security and efforts to privatize all or part of this key piece of the welfare state.

Southern California: The Southern California chapter of BCRS had a very exciting winter. Fifty social workers

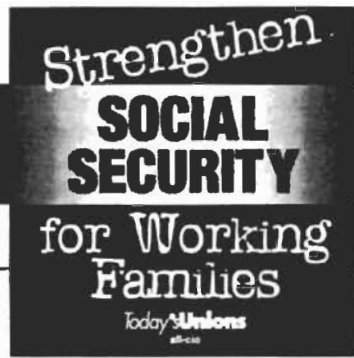
from throughout the county came to our November meeting at Liberty Hill Foundation. LHF is a progressive foundation that supports hundreds of community organizations working for racial equality, social and economic justice, peace, the environment and women's rights. The goal of the evening was to introduce BCRS to

progressive social workers. We were overwhelmed by the turnout and hope to continue to engage these people in our work.

Our January meeting agenda was focused on identifying a topic around which we could design an action campaign for social workers. Two ideas which received the most interest were: welfare and living wage. As a next step, we invited Sam Mistrano, Executive Director of the Human Services Network, (HSN was founded out of LHF to bring all groups affected by "welfare reform" together to maximize the planning to benefit recipients) to outline for us their welfare campaign. BCRS member Beth Meltzer coordinated and hosted this event at her home and set the tone by preparing an amazing dinner for the lucky twenty who attended.

And March 5th, our chapter ran a workshop for the annual NASW Leg Day, "Classism or Racism: Disenfranchisement in Human Services." Thirty-five people attended, the BCRS workshop entitled, "Are We Agents of Change or Sargents in the System?" Christie Coho and Debra Colman facilitated the workshop with support from Jane Stewart, Woody Nance, and Mara Ziegler (who graciously and skillfully filled the void left by two BCR members with last minute office crisis). Over the three years we have been facilitating workshops, a really excellent process has evolved. The basic format is an opening speaker or panel, then all participants get into small groups. In the groups issues around a particular topic (i.e., classism in social work) are discussed; possible solutions are generated; and an action plan is developed. Everyone than regroup and shares their action plans; common themes and solutions are identified, as a closing (with one final BCRS plug!) Christie and Debra are writing a paper on this work which will be submitted to the BCRS journal, *Progressive Human Services*. ■

Why Replacing Social Security with Private Accounts Would Be Bad for Working Families



Social Security, America's most successful social program, can continue protecting working families if we take prudent steps now to shore it up. But some special interests want to trade Social Security in for private investment accounts. Compare the principles underlying responsible reform with those behind the move for private accounts.

	WHAT SOCIAL SECURITY DOES	WHAT PRIVATE ACCOUNTS WOULD DO
Dependability	Very. For 60 years, Social Security has provided monthly benefits without fail to elderly Americans, people with disabilities and survivors.	Risky. Many workers in Chile and England, which have privatized systems, have suffered huge losses, and the governments have faced higher costs.
Retirement age	Currently 65 for full benefits, gradually rising to 67 by 2027.	70 or higher.
Is a minimum benefit level guaranteed?	Yes. Benefits are based on how long a worker has been employed and the average of his/her lifetime earnings.	No. Total benefit would be based on a worker's luck in the stock market. Guaranteed benefits would be cut by 40 percent or more. Some proposals would use privatized accounts to buy annuities; while monthly benefits would be assured, the total amount of the benefits still would depend on how well or poorly the account fared in the stock market.
Are benefits guaranteed for life?	Yes. Benefits can't run out.	Maybe. If accounts are not required to be paid out as monthly benefits (what accountants call "annuitized"), income would stop when the accounts are exhausted.
Protection against inflation	Yes. Benefit levels rise with prices over time to maintain purchasing power.	Some plans offer no protection against inflation, so investments could lose value over time. If accounts are required to be paid out as inflation-adjusted annuities, there is protection.
Administrative costs	Less than 1 percent of benefits paid each year.	Administrative costs for private insurance are 12 to 14 percent, based on estimates from the American Council on Life Insurance. Chile's costs are as high as 20 percent. These costs come directly out of benefits for recipients.
Who supports it	Working families, unions, seniors, civil rights and women's groups, consumer groups, religious organizations and disability advocates.	Wall Street investment companies, anti-union think tanks, backers of Prop. 226 and school vouchers and their political allies in Washington, D.C.

Call Congress toll-free at 1-877-722-7494.
 For more information about the AFL-CIO's campaign to strengthen Social Security for working families, call toll-free 1-877-760-2340 or visit www.aflcio.org/socialsecurity.

Submitted by National Steering Committee member Ken Grossinger

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Social Work & Social Living The practice and philosophy of social work are critically examined. Reynolds argues, based upon her experiences with labor unions that the orientation of social agencies toward psychological dynamics makes it difficult for clients to seek help. Softbound		List Price \$8.95 Member Price \$8.00	
Between Client & Community Caseworkers are often caught between the conflicting needs of their clients and the community especially in times of rapid change. Reynolds examines how these conflicting demands can be resolved. Softbound		List Price \$8.95 Member Price \$8.00	
Uncharted Journey Reynolds' inspirational autobiography dedicated "young social workers who are facing realities and shaping our profession with courage and creativity." Covers the development of her practice philosophy and the course of her career from 1914-1964. Softbound		List Price \$21.95 Member Price \$20.00	
The Years Have Spoken A collection of annual greetings sent by Reynolds to her friends from 1935-1973. The collection includes her annual original verse and narrative describing the condition of the world that year and how she had been affected by these events. Makes an excellent holiday or graduation gift. Softbound		List Price \$12.95 Member Price \$10.00	
Regulating the Lives of Women, Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present, Mimi Abramovitz This dynamic history demonstrates that the "feminization of poverty" and the welfare state's current assault on women are not recent developments but have long been a defining feature of women's conditions. Softbound.		List Price \$16.00 Member Price \$14.00	
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The Quest for a Radical Profession, Social Service Careers and Political Ideology, David Wagner A fascinating account of the surge and decline of radical thought and activities by social workers since the 1960's. A highly readable well-researched analysis of personal and political development among activists. Softbound.		List Price \$21.00 Member Price \$19.00	
Serving the People, Social Services and Social Change, Ann Withorn While social service work and political activism have often been viewed as separate and opposing forces this book argues persuasively that the two endeavors can and should be combined for the benefit of both. Hard cover		List Price \$45.00 Member Price \$40.00	
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