

Paths From the Swamp of Substandard Health Care: Toward a Single-Payer System

Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

There is a consensus that in terms of health care reform, we are at a watershed moment that comes around only ever decade or so. It is imperative that some form of inclusive, affordable, and quality health care be legislated now or we will all suffer the consequences of delay.

This article is intended to identify and reference some of the major bills related to health care and to briefly discuss the dual dilemmas of “the best being the enemy of the possible” as well as the idea that “half a bridge” may not get us where we need to go. Progressives are likely to favor single-payer (SP) health care, emphasizing that it is the most cost-effective, inclusive, and consumer-oriented model since this would eliminate, or minimize, the role of the for-profit health insurance companies. Thus, they may strongly urge advocates to hold out for this option - or at least to hold out as long as they can in order to get a “pragmatic alternative” as close to this model as feasible.

This writer believes that there are principled, credible advocates of alternative proposals who agree that SP is the best policy solution and disagree only on the strategy for achieving it. They believe a pragmatic, incremental program approach is a likelier route to single payer than holding out for full enactment in one fell swoop.

Current Legislative Proposals for Health Care Reform

In the House, John Conyers, Jr. has a single payer bill, HR 676 (<http://www.guaranteedhealthcare.org/legislation/hr-676-conyers/united-states-national-health-insurance-act>). In the Senate, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) has introduced a single payer bill as well (http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=132x8308504). There is also single-payer rationale from the healthcare advocates in the labor movement (<http://www.laborforsinglepayer.com/>).

A powerful coalition of left and center Democratic leaders including President Obama and the chairmen of the five Congressional committees with jurisdiction over health reform (George Miller, Henry Waxman, Ted Kennedy, Charles Rangel, and Max Baucus) appear to have agreed on a broad outline endorsing: (1) mandatory insurance for all, with employers required to pay part of the cost; and (2) a government “public health insurance plan option” (e.g. Medicare or the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan) as an alternative to private insurance. Payment for coverage of the uninsured is a major difficulty that has not yet been resolved, especially since Republicans are seeking to block the public health insurance plan option on the grounds that it would compete with private insurers. The differences between a single payer plan - the Sanders single-payer bill in this example - and the more centrist bills by some of the legislators noted earlier are summarized by the Physicians for a National Health Program (http://www.pnhp.org/news/2009/march/sen_bern_sanders_.php). A key issue here is whether or not Health Care Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Montana) will allow or be able to preserve the public health care option in the face of resistance from the insurance industry opponents.

The Strategic Case for Single Payer HC

For those who favor SP, the thorniest question is timing: how long will it take to educate the public sufficiently to win SP over a well-funded campaign by the insurance and drug industries and anti-government conservatives? Proponents argue that: (1) *if* the public could be educated to understand its practicality, it would be accepted despite fierce industry resistance; and (2) the adoption of a “half a loaf ” can also make things worse since the public may wrongly equate the half-measure with actual SP. This could also set back incremental reforms. SP advocates recognize that there is no magic bullet or one-size-fits-all SP plan. This individualized approach can be used to good advantage by having a state plan that can coordinate with consumers at the local service delivery level. This may be more acceptable (or make it harder for

Continued on Page 12

“Building the Unsettling Force: A National Conference to Abolish Poverty”

Thursday, July 16, 2009 — Sunday, July 19, 2009

Spalding University — Louisville, Kentucky

See Page 6 & 7 for more details!

Contents

Paths From the Swamp of Substandard Health Care: Toward a Single-Payer System

Gene Rothman

Page 1

Co-Chair Report

Page 2

Membership Report

Page 2

SWAA National Steering Committee

Page 3

SWAA Chapter Reports

Page 4

An Open Letter from the Journal of Progressive Human Services Collective

Page 5

SWAA-PPEHRC Joint Conference: Building the Unsettling Force

Page 6, 7

What chance do we have of actualizing a progressive welfare agenda?

Betty Reid Mandell

Page 8

Democracy in Washington, DC is a Joke: April Fool Rally

Anne Anderson

Page 9

Gateway to the Global South: Promoting a Culture of Social Justice in Mississippi and Beyond

Susan Allen

Page 10

Teaching Social Work in Ethiopia

Ruth A. Brandwein

Page 10

Dear Friend (a poem)

Elena Delavega

Page 11

Remembering Eleanor Belser

Gene Rothman

Page 11

Call for Action on Single Payer!

Natalia Salinas

Page 13

URGE NASW TO SUPPORT H.R. 676, United States National Health Care Act or the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act

Moya Atkinson

Page 13

Co-Chair Report

The financial and manufacturing meltdown, climate change, the election of Barack Obama, the electronic communication revolution, among others, have spurred grass-roots activism – change from within and the ground-up.

SWAA and our allies, the Poor Peoples' Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC) and the Journal of Progressive Human Services (JPHS) are experiencing these changes as increased interest and calls for action. SWAA has a cadre of younger and more diverse members; PPEHRC is evolving into an organization composed of a network of small, enthusiastic, local activist groups; and JPHS has a reorganized collective and a new publisher.

SWAA has mind-bending discussions on the bertha-swaa listserv, a user-friendly, informative website, including an on-line newsletter. In addition, SWAA is working on automating memberships and renewals, as well getting the word out via emails.

Our younger members bring perspective, experiences, passion, skills, and political analyses that broaden the perspective, while those of us who have been members since the 1980s bring an historical and ideological perspective that deepens the dialogue. Sometimes the result is short-term misunderstanding, but always long-term strength.

Our next opportunity to dialogue and strategize will be the 2009 Joint Conference with PPEHRC in Louisville July 16-19. Those of you who have attended our conferences know how dialogic, participatory, and energizing they are. The proposals now coming in promise more of the same this year. The **Save the Date** flyer **Call for Proposals** and **Registration Form** are on the website for use and sharing with work and school colleagues. Registration information will be included soon. See you in Louisville! BE THERE!

Marilynn Moch

Manoj Pardasani

SWAA Co-Chairs

March 2009 Membership Report

In February 2009 the Membership Committee sent out its annual membership renewal letter and 2009 SWAA/PPEHRC Save the Date Flier to 733 individuals.

Membership Summary for 2009 (As of March 13, 2009)

1 New Member joined in 2009

74 individuals have paid dues since January 1, 2009

Of the 74 individuals who have paid dues since January 1, 2009 30 were faculty members

Of the 74 individuals who have paid dues since January 1, 2009 10 were students or low income

Membership Summary for 2007 and 2008 – IN REVIEW...-

181 New people joined in 2008

Of 181 new members 64 were 2008 Conference attendees

Membership type student 2008- 37 students

Membership type faculty 2008- 39 faculty

Membership type regular 2008- 45 regular

182 New people in 2007

138 new people in 2007 were conference 2007 attendees

Kate Shimshock,

SWAA Membership Chair



Thank you to the following SWAA members for their assistance with the newsletter: Susan Allen, Heather Greene, Peter Kindle, Don Schweitzer, John Sinclair, and Laura Walther. A special thanks to Greg Kauffman for providing such wonderful graphics.

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*Co-Chairs share one vote on the NSC.

**The representatives the current year's Conference Committee and year immediately preceding the current year (not currently listed) share one vote on the NSC.



Chapter Reports

Ann Arbor

For information on the Ann Arbor Chapter, contact ssw.swaa@umich.edu.

Chicago

For information on the Chicago chapter, contact Jill Murray at swaachicago@gmail.com.

Denver Chapter Report

SWAA-Denver held a participatory workshop on Reframing the Immigration Debate on March 31, 2009. This summer we are planning to have a strategic planning session to further develop as a chapter. Please contact Stephanie Bell, MSW student, University of Denver at 314.369.8135 for more information.

Houston

For information on the Houston chapter, visit <http://swaa.wordpress.com>.

Mississippi Chapter Report

The Mississippi Chapter is taking action this spring in the northern part of the state. We are beginning a community development committee in Sardis, Mississippi. With local indigenous leadership taking the reins, we are addressing the inequities in the community, and the inadequacy of the local services and resources to meet the needs of the community. While it is not clear yet the direction we will go as we tackle this issue, it is encouraging to have some action happening under the banner of the SWAA umbrella here in this part of the state. As students in the social work program in the fall, three young women from Sardis began the work and sowed the seeds that we are now ready to nurture. Our first community meeting will be in March, so we'll keep you posted. For more information on the Mississippi chapter, contact Susan Allen at scallen@bellsouth.net, or if in the southern part of the state, give a call to Mike Forster at University of Southern Mississippi (michael.forster@usm.edu).

Portland Chapter Report

The Portland Chapter has continued to bring progressive content to the SSW at Portland State University through their "Red Lunch Box" series, a play on the typical brown bag lunch meetings that the school organized for mainstream clinical social workers. Recent speakers included representatives from Oregonians for Health Security and the Partnership for Safety and Justice. Additionally, our chapter co-sponsored the Town Hall on the Economic Crisis organized by Jobs with Justice, Oregon Action and the First Unitarian Church. We also supported the annual Martin Luther King Jr Day March and Rally, organized by Sisters of the Road.

Recent developments have helped fuel resurgence in interest in SWAA. The new BSW cohort at PSU has had some intense experiences confronting oppression and racism within the Social Work program, and is organizing the school to adopt a more proactive anti-oppressive practice within the curriculum. Also, some folks involved with the Alumni Association and the Curriculum Committee have been looking to promote a more progressive design for the school's community based practice concentration. Finally, a local SWAA member was recruited to teach the community organizing class at the SSW this spring term, which has helped create more opportunities for students to build the SWAA chapter and engage in projects under the chapter's banner. All these efforts have helped breathe more life into the work of this on again/off again chapter. For more information, please contact swaapdx@hotmail.com.

Rochester Chapter Report

The Rochester Chapter has been recovering from its whirlwind of fall activities. In October, we organized a conference entitled *Poverty and Violence: Assault on Human Rights*. More than 200 people from many segments of the community came together to hear keynote speakers, activists and authors Diane Dujon and Ann Withorn discuss connections between violence in our community and economic injustice. Author and Yale University professor Elijah Anderson also spoke, and his topic was *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black and Male*, explaining how the global economy is creating fewer jobs, global competition for low paying jobs and hence fewer options for poor, particularly young black men, to pull themselves out of poverty. The conference concluded with Rochester SWAA's first "Truth Commission, Putting Poverty on Trial." Fred Newdom, who presented at the conference, also served as moderator for the Truth Commission.

The Truth Commission was largely a joint effort between the graduate students from the Greater Rochester MSW Collaborative, a Social and Economic justice BSW class at SUNY Brockport, and the local community. SWAA's Hubert Wilkerson, formerly an organizer with Poor People United, played an important role by serving as a liaison between students and the grassroots community. His guidance allowed students to learn key interviewing techniques that supported the collection of several Economic Human Rights Violations. Truth Commissioners representing a variety of backgrounds and experiences, such as union organizing, social services administration, outreach to the homeless, and general human rights activism, acknowledged the testimonies and provided suggestions on how to alleviate further violations.

The following weekend, the Rochester Chapter hosted the SWAA National Steering Committee. There was a great turnout and many local members graciously stepped up to feed, house and connect with our National members. Cheri Honkala of Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign was in attendance and shared some of her experiences at the RNC.

Currently we are working on getting local members and interested grassroots leaders to the National SWAA Conference in July.

We are still continuing to organize Reality Tours in the City of Rochester and fund a paid part-time organizer that works with a very dedicated SWAA member to plan, update and implement our Reality Tours. An example of this is a plan to organize a pilot tour for the differently-abled riders this spring.

Lastly, we are organizing a Spring 2009 event to further our work of highlighting poverty and economic human rights. We are bringing Ethel Long Scott, aka "Street Warrior" and Executive Director of the Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP), to Rochester as our keynote speaker. Ms. Long Scott will address an academic audience at the State University of New York at Brockport, a community audience in the City of Rochester, and will meet with local SWAA members.

We hope to present these local organizing efforts to the national audience at the joint SWAA-PPEHRC Louisville Conference in July. Looking forward to seeing you all there! For more information about the Rochester SWAA chapter, contact swaa@swaarochester.org.

How To Organize a SWAA Chapter

Any group of 10 current SWAA members can create a Chapter. "How to Organize a SWAA Chapter" organizing packets are available from the SWAA website at www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org or by contacting Melissa Sydor at melsk@me.com or 585-262-4366. 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! Please allow four weeks for delivery.

An Open Letter from the Journal of Progressive Human Services Collective

The Journal of Progressive Human Services (JPHS) Editorial Collective would like to thank the SWAA community for your continued and invaluable support as contributors, subscribers and members of the Consulting Editorial board. We would like to take this opportunity to update you regarding some of our recent transitions and developments and our vision of the journal as a forum for radical social work.

We are delighted to tell you that the Editorial Collective, which out of necessity temporarily suspended its in 2007, has regrouped and reorganized. We have two new Collective members, Gregory Gross and Sadie Fowler. Greg and Sadie bring exciting, fresh perspectives to our group and we are very happy that they have joined us. Finally, we are most appreciative of David Prichard, who single-handedly managed the two JPHS issues, 19(1) & 19(2) during our period of transition.

We have come through these transitions renewed, refreshed and reenergized. In our commitment to value providers and recipients of social services without regard to the hierarchies of advanced degrees, we are redoubling our efforts to seek shorter, more informal contributions that allow us to hear the voices of “non-academics”, along with the academic articles that have been our bread and butter for more than thirty years. This emphasis includes our new “Notes from the Field” section and an expansion of our “Soapbox” column. We envision Notes from the Field as being a place for those working in social services to describe examples of radical social work in a less formal and academic manner. In the Soapbox section, we are encouraging contributors to address specific issues, such as, for issue 20(1) “A Critique of the 2008 Presidential Election” and for issue 20(2) “What is radical social work in contemporary times?” (submissions due June, 2009), and for issue 21(1) “Virtue in social work” (submissions due Dec. 2009). We encourage you to contribute to the “Soapbox” and “Notes from the Field” sections, as well as helping us to solicit contributions from practitioners, service recipients, and others. Contributions to these sections of the journal should be sent to Flower Noble, one of the social work practitioner activists in our collective. She can be contacted at flownoble@hotmail.com.

Barbara Meldrum brings ample experience to her role as editor for the “Roses, Poetry, and Prose” section, and has always had a commitment to publishing the work of nonacademic and academic people. We continue our efforts to seek poetry, prose, two dimensional art (including cover art and comic strips), and photography. If you would like to submit poetry, prose, or artwork, please contact Barbara at bkmeldrum@gmail.com.

We will continue to publish reviews of books likely to be of interest to our readership. One of our newest collective member, Greg Gross, is also our new Book Review Editor. We are very appreciative of Greg’s work and we look forward to quality reviews. We also want to thank our previous book review editor, Elizabeth Radian, for her hard work and perceptive reviews over a period of many years. If there is a book you would like to see reviewed, or you would like to publish a book review, please email Greg at grossg@mail.strose.edu. And, don’t be surprised if Greg contacts you to review books for us.

We continue to seek manuscripts that offer a politically radical perspective on topics pertaining to the human services, including articles that examine individual, group, community, societal, structural, local and international issues from global and local perspectives, particularly those which take into account legacies of capitalism, imperialism, social class, liberalism, neo-liberalism, colonization, post colonialism, environmental racism, gender and the politics of abuse, and post modernist understandings. It is our intention to continue to encourage

submissions from authors from diverse regions of the world which address radical social work politics, practice, and/or policy. We strongly encourage you to write for JPHS and to consider serving on our Board of Consulting Editors. Please address all submissions, questions about submissions and inquiries about the Consulting Editorial Board to Marcia Cohen, our long standing collective member who has been part of JPHS since its inception in 1976, at mcohen@une.edu.

In Solidarity,

The JPHS Editorial Collective Members:

Marcia Cohen, Sadie Fowler, Greg Gross, Barbara Meldrum, Flower Noble, Otrude Moyo, Dave Prichard

Table of Contents

Volume 19

Number 2

2008

“A Black Benefit:” Racial Prejudice Among White Welfare Recipients in a Low-Income Neighborhood

Carol Cleaveland

Of Pots of Gold and Pots of Glue: Society’s maltreatment of America’s Poorest Children and Their Families

Corey S. Shdaimah

Prisoner Citizen: Carl Upchurch, Labeling Theory and Symbolic Interactionism

Roberty Kronick

Denis A. Thomas

Unlocking Doors: Providing MSW Programs and Students with Educational “Keys” to Social Justice

Diane R. Weiner

Mitch Rosenwald

Relationships and the Research Process: Participatory Action Research and Social Work

Rosemary Barbera

BOOK REVIEWS

Let Them Eat Prozac: The Unhealthy Relationship Between the Pharmaceutical Industry and Depression

By David Healy

Reviewed by Rodney B. Diesder

Teamsters and Turtles? U. S. Progressive Political Movements in the 21st Century (People, Passions and Power series)

By J. C. Berg, (Ed.)

Reviewed by Ken Collier

Case Critical: Social Services and Social Justice in Canada, (5th ed.)

The Poorhouse: America’s Forgotten Institution

By David Wagner

Reviewed by Patrick Selmi

Building the Unsettling Force

A National Conference
To End Poverty

Save the Date

July 16th through 19th
Louisville, Kentucky

Analysis and Action
to End Poverty

Presented by:

The
Poor People's Economic
Human Rights Campaign

and

The
Social Welfare
Action Alliance

“Building the Unsettling Force: A National Conference to Abolish Poverty”



Organized by the
Social Welfare
Action Alliance (SWAA)
and the Poor Peoples
Economic Human
Rights Campaign (PPEHRC)



Thursday, July 16, 2009 — Sunday, July 19, 2009
Spalding University — Louisville, Kentucky

This conference is being organized to provide a forum for people to share ideas, inspire, and motivate each other. We will strive for collective actions based in sound analyses - actions that can be taken locally, regionally, and nationally when we leave this gathering. Abolish poverty in these times of increasing joblessness, homelessness, hunger, and unemployment? We say “yes” and turn to the wisdoms of Martin Luther King, who envisioned an organized “unsettling force” built across racial lines that would spark a “revolution of values” to reorganize our society.

Registration Materials Now Available!

Visit www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org for the latest on the conference, including registration, programs, sponsorship forms and other details.

For more information, contact:

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Larry Bresler – 216-651-2606 – lbresler@economichumanrights.org

SWAA (www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org)
Manoj Pardasani – 212-636-6622 – mpardasani@fordham.edu



www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org

What chance do we have of actualizing a progressive welfare agenda?

With the Obama election, many of us are wondering how far we can push the new Administration in a progressive direction. As Frances Fox Piven says, he won't go left unless there is a powerful movement pushing him in that direction. Piven compares him to FDR, under whose Administration many liberal programs, including Social Security, were enacted. FDR began as a centrist but was pushed to the left by protest movements.

There has been a steady drum roll of pundits proclaiming that welfare reform is a success. In the face of all this opposition, what chance do we have of achieving anything progressive on the welfare issue? Is it futile to even try, considering the current economic situation? It is certainly a formidable challenge, but what does it gain us if we succumb to hopelessness and give up our vision of a better world? Paul Krugman expressed it well:

Some people say that our economic problems are structural, with no quick cure available; but I believe that the only important structural obstacles to world prosperity are the obsolete doctrines that clutter the minds of men.

These are the "mind forg'd manacles" that William Blake wrote about in his poem "London":

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

We may not get to the promised land of a compassionate system that takes collective responsibility for people's welfare, but we need a vision of what such a system would look like in order to even begin the journey toward our goal.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) is due to be reauthorized by Congress in 2010. The financial meltdown and rising unemployment will force policy makers to take a fresh look at the work requirements and the time limits of TANF. It may even be an opportune time to introduce a completely new approach to helping parents to care for their children. The middle class has fallen into the ranks of the poor, and is beginning to understand the need for welfare. When middle class people are affected, then we can begin to talk about universal, not means-tested, benefits. Barbara Ehrenreich says it best:

If that sounds politically unfeasible, consider this: When Clinton was cutting welfare and food stamps in the 90s, the poor were still an easily marginalized group, subjected to the nastiest sorts of racial and gender stereotyping. They were lazy, promiscuous, addicted, deadbeats, as whole choruses of conservative experts announced. Thanks to the recession, however — and I knew there had to be a bright side — the ranks of the poor are swelling every day with failed business owners, office workers, salespeople, and long-time homeowners. Stereotype that! As the poor and the formerly middle class Nouveau Poor become the American majority, they will finally have the clout to get their needs met.

With the "audacity of hope," some Boston area activists formed a group called the "Care Caucus" to talk about improvements or alternatives to welfare, to clarify our thinking about policies, and to try to influence legislation. There are 14 people in the group, and it is open to others. It meets monthly. It is coordinated by Betty Reid Mandell, who wrote an article about care work to provide a basis for discussion. She can be contacted at mmandell@curry.edu if anyone would like to see the article, or would like to ask questions about the group.

At their first meeting in January, the group drafted the following position paper:

Why the Care Caucus

- Instead of offering universal support, recognition and guidance for the nec-

essary and valuable work of parenting, PRWORA has provided sanctions, inadequate assistance and stigma to recipients

- As reauthorization nears and the economy deteriorates, it is time to call for a system that will replace TANF;
- This needs to be centered on the idea of care giving and its value.

Some problems with TANF

- There are objections to TANF from a number of perspectives
 - Feminist (see also economic rights)
 - Women are punished for being outside the nuclear family model
 - Care giving is an important societal service and should be valued
 - Human/universal rights
 - Recipients are stripped of their choices: e.g. child-care
 - Recipients cannot raise their children but must use day care
 - Race and class
 - Black households, disproportionately represented, are stigmatized
 - Implicit scorn of African-American realities, e.g. household structure
 - Economic rights
 - Model of 2-parent family reinforced in many ways: e.g. child support
 - Why widows, divorcees, and spouses' entitlements under OASDI?
- PRWORA makes many assumptions that should not be accepted; some follow:
 - *Regarding social norms and social responsibility:* Work fosters character, respect, self-government, as well as self-esteem and societal value. Parents show responsibility and care for their families through work — and this is only work if wages are earned
 - *Regarding the social contract:* Recipients are only entitled to receive the care of a welfare state if they participate in wage-labor. In this view, child care workers participate in "productive" activity, but a mother does not
 - *Regarding social control:* Recipients are deprived self-determination, believed to have limited capacities for prudent decision making. It is decided on their behalf that any job will be better for the family than the care the recipient provides at home. If child care is needed, children are removed from a parent's care and placed in a setting that is supposed to be better for the child
- None of the above recognizes the value of dependent care to a family and to society. None of the above acknowledges that the choice to provide care to a dependent may be an important one; one that should be respected; one that should be "counted".
- Further, the welfare system assumes that jobs are available, family sustaining jobs can be achieved within a reasonable period, and that the system of work supports in place is enough to get families out of poverty.
- We know these assumptions are not true, particularly today — as the economy sours, the effects on current recipients and applicant households will be profound.

What should replace TANF

- A new system that offers a benefit to care work that is:
 - Universal
 - A cash benefit
 - Provides flexibility to the recipient to pursue a job, education, other opportunities as well as care provision

Initial vision statement

"Every person responsible for the care of another should be entitled to a cash benefit which, in combination with existing and applicable social support programs, will provide recipients with a stable and secure foundation from which they can enrich their families, communities, and society and realize their potential and opportunity to contribute through care giving, education, employment and other valuable contributions."

Betty Reid Mandell
mmandell@curry.edu

Democracy in Washington, DC is a Joke: April Fool Rally

Perhaps by the time this article is published, some of the particulars will have changed, but my bet is that the Rally by DC citizens on April 1, 2009, will still be very much to the point.

The Congress has actually taken up the so-called "DC Voting Rights" bill, the House passed it with much fanfare about finally granting the Delegate from DC a vote in the House, and the Senate also passed it, with an amendment that wipes out any local control of guns in DC, for now and into the future. As of this writing, there are intense discussions going on in the House, where Democrats vulnerable to the pressures from the National Rifle Association are saying they want to do something similar. Our Delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, is framing her response in terms of the civil rights of DC citizens to have a vote in the House. Furthermore, there are still major concerns about the constitutionality of this approach to remedy for DC's unequal footing. Almost certainly, if passed, the bill will go to the Supreme Court for a ruling.

However, if this bill actually gets passed in its current form with the amendment stripping us of our gun control laws, in the name of protecting our 2nd amendment rights, we will have a basically meaningless vote in the House, no representation in the Senate, and still no local control over anything. Angola, while it was a French colony, had a vote in the French legislature, and France still ran roughshod over them. This is why many folks in DC say we are living in the last colony.

As far as I am concerned, all of these arguments in Congress and in the media miss the major point of these shenanigans: The Senate continues to exercise its absolute control over District of Columbia affairs at the same time that they give away a vote in the House. The problem with the "DC Voting Rights" bill as it stands is that DC's basic relationship to Congress has not changed. They can still do whatever they please with the laws, money, structure, voting or not-voting status, etc., with no need to consult with the citizens of DC, including repealing our gun laws - and this is coming out of the Senate, where we still have no voice at all.

Giving the delegate a vote in the House and touting it as a serious attempt to rectify our unequal status does not truly reflect the situation as it will remain. And, when DC has a representative in Congress that can vote (assuming that this notion passes the Supreme Court's review), we will be stuck with this whole structure for the foreseeable future because it is hard enough to get the country's attention to our plight when we have no vote - I can't imagine getting through the complexities of why we would need a senate vote for "only a city." (Never mind that we have more people than several states, etc.)

For the record, I have been considering this issue and working on it since 1971, when I joined the DC Statehood Party. I am in favor of granting statehood to the residential parts of DC, leaving a small federal district that encompasses the main federal buildings downtown. I have been involved in the attempt to pass a constitutional amendment to grant us full participation in both houses of Congress, in the attempt to apply for statehood that took place about 20 years ago (or so), have reviewed the possibility of retrocession to Maryland (if they would vote

to accept us), have supported the efforts to address our plight through successful petition to the various international human rights entities and have concluded that the only way to fully join the United States on an equal basis is to live in a state - the state of New Columbia, as our petition to Congress for statehood named us.

I have read the statement on the NASW website supporting this bill. The statement is actually very good in understanding what the problems are, but NASW has chosen the wrong remedy to support. While I can imagine that it will be difficult for NASW to rethink their original position at this point, perhaps, given the amendment that has come from the Senate that will create such havoc among our communities, there is the possibility that they would be willing to call for full equality and note that this bill, as it is currently written, does not go far enough - that we really are entitled to FULL representation and local autonomy, just like everyone else in the country.

Full statehood for the District of Columbia would mean:

- The 1980 vote by the people of Washington DC for statehood would be recognized
- Full voting representation in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate
- Local control over DC's local budget – end of Congressional review and approval
- An elected district attorney – Referendum A as passed by 89% of DC residents in 2002
- Locally elected judges (now appointed by President of US)
- Right to tax income earned in District of Columbia (including non-residents)
- Restoration of federal payment to compensate for DC's federal land and federal functions (41% of land in DC now is tax-free)
- An end to the U.S. violation of the human and civil rights as ruled by the UN Human Rights Committee, Organization of American States and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
- DC residents would be first-class citizens at last!

(DC Statehood Constitution ratified by the voters of the District of Columbia in 1982; demands of Stand Up! for Democracy in DC Coalition [aka Free DC!] – FreeDC.org [1997] and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], 2005 - Worldright).

I can send you a timeline of the 209 years of history since citizens of Washington, DC, were disenfranchised, after having been part of the beginnings of this country. Please contact me to explore this issue more fully. There are also a couple of websites you might be interested in reviewing: www.FreeDC.org, www.DCStatehoodNowYesWeCan.org, www.dcstatehoodgreen.org.

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Gateway to the Global South: Promoting a Culture of Social Justice in Mississippi and Beyond

In 1998, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan suggested that a “broader vision for peace and security than military might” required several essential components. This vision would need to include education and literacy, health and nutrition, and human rights and fundamental freedoms. Peace and security would result from alleviating poverty and injustice.

Mississippi shares a set of vulnerabilities and challenges with the rest of the global South, and they all intersect with poverty as the driving force. Education and literacy are inadequate here, as they are in San Pedro, Belize, and in rural Africa. Students from the Mississippi delta enter the University of Mississippi with only the barest of reading and writing skills. Unable to think critically, write a complex (or in some cases, simple) sentence, or comprehend the textbook or scholarly journal articles, they are at a marked disadvantage. In San Pedro, there are more children needing school enrollment than there are spaces. There are children in San Mateo - the colonial area of San Pedro which has no water, no sewage, and no electricity - sitting at home as there are no spaces in the schools to accommodate them. Falling further and further behind, they are at increased risk for maintaining the generational poverty that has engulfed their community.

Limited or no access to health care, poverty, and a foundation of injustice are the inheritances of the children in areas of Mississippi as well as in Belize and Africa. In Mississippi, it is called the Cradle to Prison Pipeline - where young African American boys as early as first grade are channeled into alternative schools and headed toward prison at a rate that is alarming (Children's Defense Fund, 2007). Mississippi spends more money on incarceration than on education (Grassroots Leadership, 2002). Grandparents are raising their grandchildren and great-grandchildren - in Mississippi due to parental incarceration or drug abuse; in Africa because of AIDS.

These vulnerabilities and challenges demonstrate problems remain rooted in the inequalities between the rich and poor. As a member of the Global South Faculty Working Group, I am embarking on a new project with colleagues: Promoting a Culture of Social Justice in Mississippi and Beyond. Our purpose is to create a conversation around not just the foundations of injustice, but where we go next. We want that conversation to be held with those who have been excluded: what can we understand about how to create a culture of social justice - understanding that to do so would be in the best interests of all of us. What would a culture of social justice look like? How could you or would you develop it in a sustainable way? How can we take the ideals and transpose them into concrete objectives and strategies which we then have an obligation to promote (Martin, 2005)? We realize it is a daunting task; nonetheless, as we embark on this trip it is with the anticipation that we will discover something that will be of value, not just for the sake of knowing and understanding, but also with the goal of action.

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Teaching Social Work in Ethiopia

This January I spent a month in Ethiopia, teaching doctoral course in social policy to students at Addis Ababa University School of Social Work. This is a new school. The MSW program started six years ago, and the Ph.D. was begun three years ago. I taught the third entering class of 12- nine men and three women. This year they've begun their BSW program. The students are terrific! None in my class had MSWs (the previous two classes did). They had degrees in demography, law, counseling, psychology and women's studies. All college classes are taught in English. They were hard working and most appreciative of my coming there.

In order not to be a cultural imperialist, I was careful not to teach U.S. social welfare history or policies. Instead I introduced articles on oppression, social justice and human rights as a base for policy development and analysis. Then I presented a problem analysis framework I had developed at Stony Brook, followed by readings on policy analysis (including David Gil, of course). Their assignments were first to identify a social problem in Ethiopia and then to identify and analyze a government policy addressing it; or where one did not exist, to develop one. The problems they identified included AIDS and AIDS orphans, child abuse (including sexual abuse and child labor), child prostitution, rapid population growth, intimate partner violence and discrimination against people with disabilities.

The dean, faculty and students operate under very difficult conditions. Credit cards are not used there so books cannot be ordered on-line, even when the internet is operating. They could use donations of books for their library. Right now, the faculty are either foreign, or advanced doctoral students teaching the BSW and MSW classes. They are focused on capacity-building, so this is temporary until they have enough Ph.D. graduates to teach all their students. The plan is to open several additional social work programs in other parts of the country.

I'll add just a few words about the nation. Ethiopia is a very poor country but the people are warm and friendly and they are struggling to modernize without making the mistakes that other developing nations have made. They also have a very rich culture going back thousands of years.

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“The real choice before us as social workers is whether we are to be passive or active... We must first of all know that we have allies.... In using the organizations we have we shall find others in the community also fighting in organized ways for the same issues in human welfare.”

*Bertha Capen Reynolds
Social Work and Social Living,
p.175-6*

Dear Friend, *a poem*

Dear friend,
I understand how powerful your faith is to you, how much it means, how much it makes your life fuller. I understand how much you want to follow the tenets of your faith. But please do not try to convert me.

Dear friend,
I respect your right to go to church, to worship as you wish, to sing and praise and pray. I respect your right to practice your faith in public. But please do not try to make me practice your faith.

Dear friend,
I respect your right to wear a cross, or to wear a burqua, or to shave your head. I respect your right to wear the external accoutrements of your faith in public, and to dress and cover as you wish. But please do not try to impose your faith's clothing on me.

Dear friend,
I understand your position on marriage. I respect your right to have a marriage between one man and one woman if that is what you believe, and I understand your desire to have a marriage as you feel is best. But please do not try to tell me whom I can or cannot marry, and how I must conduct my marriage.

Dear friend,
I understand your faith asks you to follow a certain sexual morality. I understand that certain sexual acts, and certain acts that arise from sexual behavior are forbidden in your faith. But please do not try to force the sexual morality of your faith on me.

Dear friend,
I understand your desire to have as many children as you believe your god will give you. I respect your right to have many children. I respect your right to reproduce as your faith requires. But please do not try to control my reproduction decisions.

Dear friend,
I respect your right to continue pregnancies that will result in severely disabled babies. I respect your right to continue pregnancies that arise from rape or incest. I respect you right to continue your pregnancy even if it will cost you your life. But please do not try to control my body and my pregnancy.

Dear friend,
I understand your desire to prevent your children from learning certain scientific facts. I respect your right to prevent your children from reading certain books. I respect your right to control what your children hear and learn. But please do not try to censor what my children hear and learn.

Dear friend,
I understand that your faith gives you some commandments, and I understand that you feel you must follow the commandments of your faith at all times. But please do not ask me to follow the commandments of your faith.

Dear friend,
I understand your faith asks you to make certain sacrifices, and certain choices. I respect your right to give up what you feel you must give up, or to accept pain and inconvenience in your life because that is what being faithful to your religion requires. But please do not ask me to make the same sacrifices and choices for a religion I do not believe in.

Dear friend,
We share this nation, we share this world. Let's try to live in harmony together. I understand and respect your beliefs. I will defend your right to follow your faith, and your right to behave as you feel you must. But please, please, do not try to convert me. Please respect my right to not follow your faith.

Dear friend,
Do not try to make me behave or dress like you. Do not try to make the same choices you feel you must make. Please, please, do not come into my bedroom and try to control my sexual behavior. Please do not try to control my body and I what I do to it. It is mine. Please, please, do not censor what I read, and do not censor what my children learn. Please, please, do not try to tell me whom to marry or what to do with my free time. Please respect my choices as I respect yours.

Dear friend,
Do not try to convert me.

Elena Delavega
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Remembering Eleanor Belser

I wish to thank Natalia Ventura for fact-checking (thank goodness) a eulogy I presented for Eleanor Belser today, March 7, 2009. She was a social workers' social worker and a founding member of SWAA who assisted in the development of the SA/SJ in its formative years, and someone who was active in numerous progressive causes especially in Southern California. Suzanne Dworak-Peck, a longtime friend of Eleanor with whom she served on the Image Taskforce, also read letters of recognition from Jim Kelly, JanLee Wong, and the International Federation of Social Workers.

Eleanor survived her husband, Joe; both were life-long activists especially around issues of race, integration, and opposition to war. She was black-listed by the House Un-American Activities Committee during the administration of Harry Truman and forced to leave federal employment.

Ms. Dworak-Peck related that Eleanor was on the national board of NASW from 1987-1990 and worked in diverse areas for NASW such as education, research, the law, and on the Peace and Social Justice council. She published numerous articles and a book on insurance reimbursement for social workers in private practice. She was also a Social Worker of the Year in 1994.

My eulogy focused on Eleanor's assistance to SA/SJ when she allowed the use of her home for meetings. She also lent her home to a Korean-American woman interested in the issue of male feminism. She convened social workers and abuse counselors which led to the ad-hoc group to support a simultaneous men's march protesting violence against women and fundraiser for trauma abuse counselors. I personally also knew Eleanor from a Friday evening peace vigil group in Mar Vista that I attended from time to time.

I am happy to report that my eulogy was well received, and SA/SJ was put on the map for this audience of some 125 people.

Thanks again to Natalia her long-time leadership on this issue and for her fact checking skills.

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Continued from Page 1

conservatives to fight) since conservatives argue - at least in theory - that they favor “smaller, more local government.” *Above all, SP advocates should oppose premature compromise in any case.* If they must adopt a “pragmatic alternative” it needs to be something close enough to SP to make it a viable stepping-stone toward a plan with increased public control in the future. Indeed, this seems to be one area of commonality with progressive supporters of incremental approaches, and could be the basis for working in coalitions to build broader public support for the idea of increased public control of health care. Each has a stake in a “bridge that goes far enough” to maintain their credibility.

In this writer’s experience, some SP advocates are mistrustful of incrementalists who seem too ready to compromise and/or are recipients of funds from the private sector and/or industry opponents. When the Obama administration would not allow SP representatives into his Healthcare Summit on March 5, (including Senator John Conyers, Jr.) this action fed the mistrust of SP advocates. The fact that Obama’s forces later relented under pressure and eventually admitted a few representatives may or may not have dispelled some of this mistrust.

The Strategic Case for Alternatives to Single Payer Care

The centrist approach being developed by President Obama and Democratic leaders includes a “Medicare for all” component in the form of the “public health insurance plan option.” The word “option” reflects the conviction of many Democrats that voters (the majority of whom have employer-based health insurance) will reject health reform out of fear unless they are first reassured that they could keep the plan they now have if they so prefer. Advocates of this approach believe that the public plan option provides an opportunity to move single payer forward *strategically* by creating a single payer system *within* a system. This would show the superiority of single payer to the next generation experientially, not just rhetorically. Given the opportunity, they argue, who would choose to pay private insurance rates over public insurance ones? This is why the private insurance companies—and the GOP—have made defeat of the public option plan a top priority this year.

Some 190 Members of Congress have endorsed this public-private approach in the form of the Health Care for America Now principles. Their link is worth showing here in full: http://healthcareforamericanow.org/site/content/statement_of_common_purpose.

It is worth noting that the popularity of Senator Ted Kennedy, with his desire to leave a favored legacy, may be another encouraging sign that such a center-left, incremental approach to single-payer might be able to succeed. Finally, it should be noted that perhaps the strongest argu-

ment for this pragmatic approach is the fact that the medical insurance industry and “Big Pharma” seem to be aware that this could be a “path to single payer” and, therefore, are opposing it bitterly.

Conclusion

This writer has seen evidence “in the trenches” of a backlash against some single payer or progressive advocates when rude and unruly advocates have made harsh verbal attacks on public officials perceived as “soft on single payer.” On such occasions, too much heat, rather than light, has led some legislators and their supporters to become leery of SP advocates due to the actions of a few overzealous advocates. This author concurs that a clear, empirically based approach for SP needs to be presented calmly, yet forcefully. At the same time, efforts should be made to defend SP with little or no compromise *unless and until* it is found that this approach is no longer viable legislatively.

As for our opponents, a good question to ask might be: “Why can’t ordinary people have the identical health care coverage that our representatives in Washington DC have - i.e., Cheney Care?” If the GOP, Blue-Dog Democrats and others will not tie benefits of the legislators to the general public, dollar for dollar, the next question might reprise the Labor refrain: “Which side are you on?”

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“Social Work can defend its standards only if it realizes the organized nature of the opposition to it, why these interests are opposed, and where its own allies are to be found.”

Bertha Capen Reynolds
Social Work and Social Living,
NASW, 1975, p. 166.



Call for Action on Single Payer!

Our social work code of ethics points out that **social workers have an ethical responsibility to challenge social injustice**. Social workers have historically fought for social justice and the creation of a more just society. So, why isn't NASW doing more to organize against the huge cuts to services to the poor and vulnerable while billions go to the bankers for a bailout?

Billions are spent on wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, while the State of California has \$42 billion less than it needs to fund schools, hospitals, and other public services. "Capitalists can buy themselves out of any crisis, so long as they make the workers pay" observed a political thinker. We are certainly paying - and there seems to be very little organizing against it. In the 1930s during the depression, workers demanded that the bosses take the losses. We need to bring this demand back. **We need to urge our professional organization to do more to fight cutbacks while Wall Street gets bailouts.** We need to urge NASW to take a more proactive stance on issues such as HR 676. "NASW supports a universal right to health care under a single payer system" (Social Work Speaks, 7th ed., p. 191). We must urge NASW to do more than just wait around for this to happen.

If we do nothing now it may become increasingly more difficult. The only growth industry expanding is the prison system. While unemployment rises and workers become more desperate, look for thousands of the jobless behind bars. They become "employed" in prison factories turning out products at \$.23.00 an hour "wages" and contributing to higher unemployment outside the prison walls.

"Total Unemployment" (the official figure of 11.1 million unemployed, plus 8 million part-timers unable to find full-time jobs, plus 5.2 million "discouraged" workers - those who have given up looking for non-existent jobs) is 24.3 million (*New York Times*, January 10, 2009). Less than 40% of unemployed are eligible for benefits. This 24.3 million is 13.5% of the labor force. Add 1.7 million imprisoned for non-violent offenses, who would be unable to find work in this crisis (70% black and Latino), plus possibly another million who joined the military because they couldn't find jobs, and the figure becomes 27 million! This *excludes* those on welfare because they cannot find jobs. Where is our "bail out?"

Please join the NASW-CA Social Action Social Justice Council May 15th at the Santa Clara Marriott from 7:30 - 9 p.m. We will view a 30 minute episode from a four-hour PBS series "Unnatural Causes...is inequality making us sick."

We aim to reinvigorate our historical fight for social justice and the creation of a more just society.

Natalia Salinas, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.
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URGE NASW TO SUPPORT H.R. 676, United States National Health Care Act or the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act

NASW sent President Barack Obama's administration its transition plan *Turning Priorities Into Action: How the Social Work Profession Will Help*. (<http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/resources/ObamaBook.pdf>). The following is taken from the section *Fixing our Health Care System*:

Provide affordable, accessible and high-quality health care to all. Social workers are the largest providers of mental health services in the nation. Social workers are also a significant provider of services to clients in health care settings. According to one survey, thirteen percent of licensed social workers identify health as their primary focus, making it the third most common practice area in the profession.

NASW supports and has advocated for a national health care policy that ensures the rights of universal access to a continuum of physical and behavioral health services to promote wellness, maintain optimal health, prevent illness and disability, treat health conditions, ameliorate the effects of unavoidable incapacities, and provide supportive long-term and end-of-life care. The services must be available to all people in the United States, regardless of financial status, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, immigration status, age, gender, sexual orientation, or geographic location. (p. 6)

John Conyers, sponsor of H.R. 676 states that it "is a bill to create a single-payer, publicly-financed, privately-delivered universal health care program that would cover all Americans without charging co-pays or deductibles. It guarantees access to the highest quality and most affordable health care services regardless of employment, ability to pay or pre-existing health conditions." (<http://johnconyers.com/hr676faq>).

Conyers defines single-payer as "one entity - in this case, established by the government - [that] handles all billing and payment for health care services. Right now, there are thousands upon thousands of "payers" HMOs, PPOs, bill collection agencies, etc. The sheer volume of paperwork required by our current system means that administrative waste accounts for roughly 31% of the money spent on health care. The single-payer system would eliminate the wasteful paperwork and administrative costs, redirecting more of our health care dollars to providing care."

Urge NASW to Support HR 676; call 1-800-867-6776; or email James Kelly, President at president@naswdc.org; Betsy Clark, Executive Director at eclark@naswdc.org; and Asua Ofosu, Senior Government Relations Associate at Aofosu@naswdc.org.

Urge your legislators to co-sponsor H.R. 676. Check the list of co-sponsors by going to <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h676/show>. If they support HR 676, thank them! To find your legislators, go to: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/findyourreps.xpd>.

Questions? Contact Hal Lipton, President, NASW-DC Metro chapter at lipmsn@aol.com; and/or Moya Atkinson at moyaatk@att.net, NASW-M.

Join the only organization of
social workers and human service workers
dedicated to activism for social and economic justice.



Who We Are

The Social Welfare Action Alliance (SWAA) is a national organization of progressive social workers and other human service workers. Founded in 1985, the Alliance is based on principles that reflect a concern for social and economic justice, peace and coalition building with progressive social movements. These principles articulate a need by social service workers for a practice and theory that responds to progressive concerns.

SWAA chapters determine their own agendas, provide forums for discussions and debates around local, national and international issues. Local chapters are represented on the national steering committee to help shape the organization's direction. In addition, the Alliance holds annual national gatherings that focus on critical issues, tools and ideas for action to promote social change.

"The real choice before us as social workers is whether we are to be passive or active."
- Bertha Capen Reynolds

Join the local chapter of the Social Welfare Action Alliance

Any group of 10 current SWAA members can create a Chapter. "How to Organize a SWAA Chapter" organizing packets are available from the SWAA website at www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org or by contacting Melissa Sydor at melmas1@yahoo.com or 585-262-4366. 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! Please allow four weeks for delivery.

www.socialwelfareactionalliance.org



**Social Welfare
Action Alliance**

A National Organization of
Progressive Workers in Social Welfare

Formerly Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

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