

# BCR REPORTS

A Quarterly Publication  
of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society

Volume VI, Number 1

Spring, 1994

## HOW ABOUT A TWO YEAR LIMIT ON POVERTY?

by Fred Newdom

**T**here are tremendous lessons for the welfare reform fight in what has happened in the debate over health care.

For more than fifty years, the left has advocated for a national health program — organized along the lines of one or another form of socialized medicine. As the reality of this country's health care (or health financing) crisis began to sink in with the purveyors of conventional wisdom, the chances looked increasingly good for a version of what we wanted. It's instructive to remember that now as the health care fight settles into its late stages and we see the single-payer forces virtually not in the game.

A major reason that single-payer proposals are seen as "unrealistic" is that they have been defined as "unrealistic." In great part, that is the case because so many of our friends and allies have opted for the "realistic" approach and embrace the Clinton plan. In essence, the Clinton plan became the left proposal and we found ourselves defending a program that we didn't much care for to begin with.

Defending the Clinton plan becomes even harder when he

spends the bulk of his time selling out that plan to the insurance industry, the business community, and the forces of the right.

Making the leap to welfare reform isn't especially hard at this point. We see the administration mixing some reasonable ideas with anti-welfare rhetoric worse than what we heard in the Reagan-Bush era — only the syntax is better. And what passes for opposition these days? There has been virtually none.

The same types of groups which joined the administration's health care crusade only to get sold out for their troubles are now clambering aboard the welfare reform bandwagon because it is the "realistic" thing to do. If there is anything we should have learned from the health care fight, it's that the absence of a left opposition means that the only forces to placate are on the right. Clinton has done that on health care with single-minded devotion. And what does he have to show for it? The business community still opposes him and the administration now has a conservative proposal which even he should be embarrassed to support.

How much conceding to the racist sexist, pro-business forces do you think Clinton will have to do in order for them to support decent policies for the women and children on welfare? Try to imagine what a welfare program that Jesse Helms could support would look like. The lesson of health care is to stand up for programs we can support and to fight a principled fight. It is refreshing when the principled thing to do is also the most effective.

Until we see a limit on the time people will be permitted to live in poverty, the idea of limiting how long poor people can get help is obscene. Our job is to fight all of the welfare reform proposals which attack the interests of poor people. This issue of *BCR Reports* contains some more tools for local organizing around welfare. An updated *Fighting Back! Challenging AFDC Myths with the Facts* is intended to give activists more ammunition to carry on the debate.

The fight on welfare reform will be hard. On the other hand if there is anything we should have learned from the health reform fight it is that the best way to fight is to support something we believe in. ■

## Letters to the Editor:

Dear Friends,  
I am proud to be the very first person to have written a doctoral dissertation on the life and thought of Bertha C. Reynolds. My dissertation entitled "Bertha C. Reynolds — Gentle Radical," was accepted by the Wurz Weiler School of Social Work of Yeshiva University in 1981.

While I was doing my work, Bertha Reynolds was still alive and I talked with her many times. She was so happy about what I was doing. In the course of one of these visits Bertha gave me a copy of a series of essays she had written on the subject of Marxism and Religion entitled "Where Do You Get Your Ethics?" These essays are unpublished, and by her request were sent to Herbert Apthekar of the Institute of Marxist Studies upon her death.

I used the essays tangentially in my study and I loaned them to another student who also did her study of Reynolds. They are listed in my bibliography.

The essays are very interesting and deserve to be read and studied and discussed. I am making a gift of them to the Pollack Library of Yeshiva University and to the Smith College Reynolds Archives.

Reynolds left us a wonderful legacy as we all know.

Onward,  
Joan L. Goldstein  
New Rochelle, NY

## Annual BCRS Conference in Seattle: July 8-10, 1994

This year's conference theme is "Progressive Approaches to a Multi-Cultural world: Strategies for Confronting and Transforming Oppression." The Puget Sound Chapter of BCRS is excited to be hosting the conference at the University of Washington. The conference will be a hotbed of discussions on how social workers and social activists can build through practice a more equitable and just world. Friday full-day Institutes include such topics as "Liberation, Oppression Theory and Practice," "Welfare Reform" and "Strategies for Confronting Oppression in the Workplace." Saturday workshops include "Strategies for Multi-Cultural Coalition Building," "Challenging Oppression through Community Organizing," "An Empowerment Model of Housing Activism," and "A Freirian Model of Social Work Supervision." Local BCRS chapters are invited to submit information to the conference planning committee about their activities. During the conference there can therefore be resource tables that will include individual chapter information (i.e., flyers, brochures, posters, fact sheets). Send this information to: CE-BCRS, School of Social Work Continuing Education, University of Washington JH-30, Seattle, Washington 98195. Phone (206) 543-5736 FAX (206) 543-1228.

You may also receive brochures by writing or calling the above.

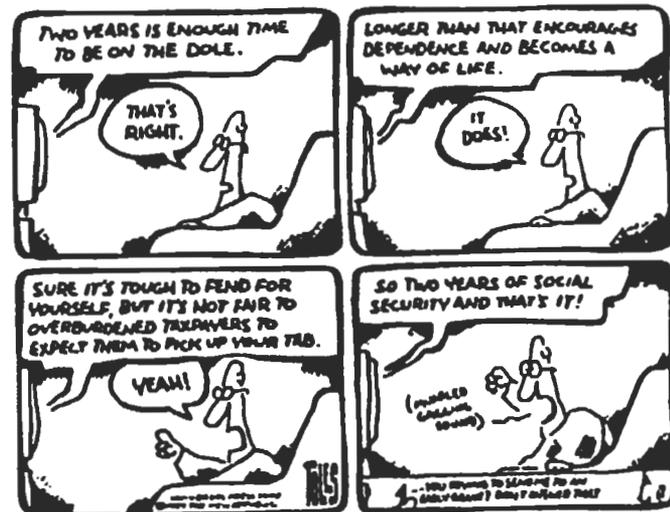
## BCRS Brochure Available:

Members wishing to order copies of the Society's brochure may request up to 100 copies by calling Mary Jo at Communication Services at (518) 463-3522, faxing her at (518) 426-3961 or writing her at: 4 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 12210. The brochure has an easy to use tear-off return form, and features an "Our Members Say" section with quotes from Chauncey Alexander, Millie Charles, Herman Curiel, Lorraine Gutierrez, Barbara Joseph, Maryann Mahaffey, Mary Bricker-Jenkins, Irmgard Wessel, Susan Kinoy and Sandy Felder. Order copies for your school or workplace today!

## How To Organize A BCRS Chapter:

"How to Organize a BCRS Chapter" organizing packets are available by contacting Mary Jo at Communication Services at (518) 463-3522, at

4 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 12210. 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 much more! Allow 4 weeks for delivery.



## **Report from the Committee for Human Rights Inquiry**

Rula Abu Duhou, imprisoned in 1988 after a year of interrogation, was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. Accused of being an accessory to murder, she has maintained her innocence of these charges, stating that her confession was forced by torture during the long period of interrogation. Her complaint of abuse and sexual harassment was made in a sworn statement published by Amnesty International in March, 1991. Duhou was a student of social work at Bethlehem University and was active in campus affairs. Her frustrated engagement to her fiancé in Chicago has meant additional suffering, together with the substandard conditions in the Hasharon prison, where she is held.

In February 1993, the Israel Association of Social Workers was able to visit Duhou, with the involvement of its Arab Division and the Welfare Ministry. She presented problems of the prisoners for whom she is a spokesperson, and made two personal requests — physical therapy for a back condition and also for aid in completing her studies for a degree in social work. No further word has been received about the efforts to make these arrangements.

The International Federations of Social Workers has urged clemency for her and the National Association of Social Workers is urging consideration of her release. Without passing judgement on her innocence, on the basis of numerous publications by human rights groups about torture in interrogation, we question the validity of the conviction and sentencing of this woman and urge her release.

Only about 600 Palestinian prisoners have been released and the Palestinians urge release of all the approximately 12,000 remaining. We urge you to write to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, 1 Kaplan Street, Bakarya, Jerusalem 91007, Israel. Please send a copy of your letter to Ruth H. Wilson, Secretary for the CHRI.

For more information about the Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry, write: CHRI, 415 Grand St., #E. 1905, New York, New York 10002, 212-674-3762.

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

Barbara Kasper, Editor  
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SUNY College at Brockport  
Brockport, NY 14420-2952  
FAX #716-395-2366

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

**Please Note:** The deadline for materials submitted for inclusion in the next *BCR Reports* is September 15, 1994.

## **Students Honor Homeless People in Baltimore**

by Joe Lynch

The University of Maryland School of Social Work's Student Council on Political Equity (SCOPE) recently co-sponsored Baltimore's National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day commemoration at City Hall. SCOPE — in cooperation with Project HUSH (Helping our UnSheltered Hungry), the Baltimore City Union of the Homeless, CASH (City Advocates in Solidarity with the Homeless), and the National Coalition for the Homeless invited all the residents of Baltimore City and the State of Maryland to join them in honoring the lives and commemorating the passing of homeless people who had died in our communities.

The group of seven Community Organization students at the School organized a candlelight vigil, memorial service, and meal in honor of departed brothers and sisters. A morning press conference was held at the corner of Charles and Fayette Streets — site of a steam grate that the city had spent \$7,000 to build a cage over so that homeless people would not have access to its warmth. The names of homeless people who had died in the city were read aloud as ribbon — adorned index cards bearing the names were paper-clipped to the grate. The admittedly-partial list was comprised of 63 women and men who had died in Baltimore while lacking an adequate night-time residence — a place to call home.

The School of Social Work students viewed this inaugural event in the city as a solemn occasion to honor the lives of departed family and friends. They declared the day to be a time to renew their commitment to neighbors in need and saw the

service as an end result of poor public policy decisions. Michael Stoops, Field Organizer of the National Coalition for the Homeless said, "It took a group of seven social work students to do what city officials, churches, and service providers had refused to do — commemorate the passing of life with a memorial service characterized by the respect and dignity that all human beings deserve." SCOPE will continue its efforts to achieve justice for all citizens — housed and unhoused.

## Jacob Fisher, 1905-1994

Jacob Fisher, a close associate and friend of Bertha Reynolds, died in March at the age of 89. He was living with his wife of sixty-two years, Cora, in a senior residence in Mitchellville, Maryland at the time of his death.

Jack has left a rich legacy, not only to progressive social work, but to the entire profession.

During the 1920's, described in his first memoir, *On Vanishing Ground*, Jack studied at N.Y.U. and received a social work degree from the Jewish School of Social Work in 1928.

In the 1930's, Jack helped to organize the National Coordinating Committee of Rank and File Groups in Social Work, a national, left-oriented movement that challenged mainstream social work leadership. An active social worker in the voluntary Jewish Federation agencies, Jack served two terms as President of the Social Services Employees Union during the 1930's.

Jack was also the first editor of the publication *Social Work Today*. Bertha Reynolds collaborated with Jack on this publication and in the promotion of trade unionism among social service employees.

Jack not only played a pioneering role in developing a progressive movement in social work. He was one of its chroniclers. His book, *The Response of Social Work to the Depression* (1980), contains a detailed account of the development of the left in social work during this period. The history of this period in social work reflects the strong impact of this movement on

the thinking and direction of the social work profession.

From 1940-1954, Jack was a researcher for the Social Security Board. He first faced a Board of Inquiry in 1948 under Truman's 1947 Executive Order establishing a Loyalty Program. Finally, under Eisenhower's 1953 Security Risk Program, an investigation resulted in Jack's suspension pursuant to an order signed by Nelson A. Rockefeller, H.E.W. Under Secretary. Jack decided to resign several weeks later.

He was among the ten thousand federal employees fired or forced to resign for their political beliefs, and among two million persons listed in the Security Investigation List.

In 1986, Jack broke what he called the general rule of silence on the part of victims of the political purge of federal civil servants, writing a memoir of this period and his earlier activism, *Security Risk*.

Ironically, he was charged with membership in the Interprofessional Association for Social Insurance and the National Committee for Unemployment and Social Insurance, organizations which advocated for Social Security, as well as for other union and progressive activism.

In his book, Jack affirmed his work to advance social welfare, build unions of social service workers, and organize socialist activism by social workers. He described his political work for Spanish democracy and other causes while a C.P.U.S.A. member from 1934-1940. He looked back at his own activism and the social movements of the times with a critical wisdom from which present activists can benefit.

Jack later spoke at an event honoring Bertha Capen Reynolds, following her re-recognition by the profession during the late 1970's and early 1980's. Following the founding of the Society, Jack was among the first persons to join in the Fall of 1985.

As organizer, editor and historian, Jack Fisher has left the progressive movement in social work a legacy from which to build and strengthen us in today's struggles.

Jack is survived by Cora; a daughter, Judith Goodkind of Alexandria, Virginia; a son, Stephen, of Wilmette, Illinois; a sister, Ruth Hollinger of Tamarac, Florida, and five grandchildren. ■

Mary Russak &  
Michael Dover

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## *The Truth Is Finally Told About "Prime Time"*

"EXTRA!" a publication of FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) published a critique of the September 1992 (rebroadcast in August 1993) segment of ABC's "Prime Time Live" television news magazine program.

The article, written by Veena Gabreros-Sud, points out the inherent racism in the portrayal of welfare recipients as well as the skewed statistics which "proved" that welfare fraud cases were as high as 50%. Gabreros-Sud reviews other media attacks on welfare recipients, including the fingerprinting "cure" for fraud and credits the September 1993 op-ed by Mimi Abramovitz and Frances Fox Piven for seeing through the hysteria. For a copy of the EXTRA! November/December 1993 publication, call the editorial office at 212-633-6700

# WELFARE REFORM NETWORK

## *Basic Principles For A Just & Humane Income Maintenance System*

### INTRODUCTION

The Welfare Reform Network of New York City has developed a set of basic principles for a just and humane income maintenance system to serve as a guide during the debate for national welfare reform. *BCR Reports* is reprinting these principles below. Feel free to give your reaction via a "letter to the editor." These principles are grounded in the belief that:

- Continuing poverty among millions of Americans must be addressed by strong federal policies that will assure families and individuals at least an adequate standard of living;
- For many people, an adequate income must be derived from a combination of paid employment in the labor market and government supports; and
- There is an urgent need for a universal economic security system that is fair, flexible and dynamic in order to eradicate poverty and strengthen our economy.

The Welfare Reform Network (WRN) was organized in June 1990 and includes Task Force on The Family Support Act, the New York City Task Force Working on Welfare and other interested groups and individuals. Inquiries to the WRN can be addressed to:

The Welfare Reform Network  
c/o Federaton of Protestant  
Welfare Agencies, Inc.  
281 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10010  
Phone: (212) 777-4800  
FAX: (212) 533-8792

### BASIC PRINCIPLES

#### Coverage

1. Benefits under an income maintenance system should be available to all people in need as a matter of right and should continue for as long as the need remains. There should be no eligibility criteria other than need. There should be no time limit on aid.

#### Adequacy

2. Benefit levels under an income maintenance system should exceed the poverty level to allow a decent standard of living. The poverty level today is a measure that does not truly reflect the income support needed to provide the minimum basic needs.
3. Annual adjustments in benefit levels, which take into account increases in the cost-of-living, should be mandated by law.
4. Asset limits for those on public assistance should be raised above current levels and indexed.

#### Administration

5. An income maintenance system should protect the dignity and privacy of its participants (both consumers and providers).
6. Administration of the system should be efficient and responsible to the needs of the people it is designed to serve and function to assure fair treatment and prompt and accurate payment of benefits.
7. The federal government should administer one unified income maintenance system that provides coverage for all needy persons.
8. All participants (consumers and providers) in an income maintenance system should receive clear information about their rights and responsibilities and receive adequate notice and hearing rights regarding benefits.

#### Employment, Training and Education

9. Education and training should be made available, along with income supports to enable people to find, keep and improve employment opportunities. Options should be available for a variety of educations and training opportunities, including four years of college.
10. Participation in employment, education and training should be voluntary, assessed on an individual basis and reflect maximum individual choice. Work in caring for dependents in the home should be recognized as valued work and included in assessing the contributions of participants.
11. Adequate support systems should be available to make employment a viable option for those who work outside the home (such as: child care, health care, transportation and family leave).
12. Public and private policies should protect against practices that channel individuals, particularly women and minorities, into jobs with low wages, few benefits and little or no opportunity for career advancement.

#### Child Support Enforcement

13. The burden of establishing paternity and child support orders should be squarely upon child support enforcement agencies. Cooperation with child support enforcement should not jeopardize the privacy and safety of an income maintenance applicant or recipient or their children, and should not result in loss of income to the family.

#### Additional Economic Security Measures

14. The federal government should promote and mandate other economic safety measures, such as an expanded earned income tax credit, an adequate minimum wage, a national child support assurance program and a national child's allowance, and expanded eligibility for unemployment benefits.
15. The federal government should promote and ensure universal health care coverage for all.

## BCRS National Steering Committee

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## The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond

The People's Institute is a national multiracial antiracist network of veteran organizers and educators dedicated to building a movement for justice by ending racism and other forms of institutional oppression. In its 13-year history, the Institute has conducted workshops for over 10,000 people across the nation and in numerous other countries. The Undoing Racism Workshops are intensive two-and-a-half-day workshops which enable participants to understand how racism has become part of our society and what we can do to eliminate it in our personal and community lives. The workshops are open to community organizers, peace and social justice activists, religious leaders, social workers, educators, etc. The workshops are offered to individual organizations or agencies upon request. Short presentations are also available to teach groups how they can begin the process of undoing racism in their communities or organizations. Two workshops scheduled in New Orleans will be held July 22-24 and October 21-23. For more information, phone 504-944-6119.

## NASW Adjudication Process is Questioned

BCR Reports has been contacted by Edward Berkowitz, a retired social worker, regarding his concerns related to the safeguarding of rights in the NASW adjudication of grievances. Berkowitz believes that NASW members affected by adjudication (as either plaintiff or respondent) need to be educated about adjudication's pros and cons.

Among his concerns are: the qualifications of members chosen for the hearings panel; the fact that an attorney may not accompany a disputant unless s/he is also an NASW member; and that neither party to the dispute is permitted to argue their case before appeals bodies. Berkowitz is interested in hearing from BCRS members who would like more informa-

tion about this and/or who may be interested in the idea of an advocacy group designed to monitor the activities of and evaluate proposed changes in NASW's adjudication structure and process. For more information, contact: Edward Berkowitz, Pocono Farms, Beaver Lane #333, Tobyhanna, PA 18466. PH: (717) 894-4323

# FIGHTING BACK!

## CHALLENGING AFDC MYTHS WITH THE FACTS

### I. WELFARE "REFORM" TODAY

The campaign promise by then-candidate Bill Clinton to "end welfare as we know it" frames the current discussion around welfare reform. While advocates would like to end those aspects of "welfare as we know it" which are harmful to clients, it is clear that the debate has more to do with limiting the length of time a client can be on the program and making that period as difficult as possible than it does with "empowering" the recipient. Coercive new plans have gained wide public support by playing to a host of stereotypes and myths about AFDC and the women who use the program. The following myths, facts, and comments can be used to undermine the stereotypes that fuel current welfare "reforms" and to build support for more progressive social policies.

### II. BACKGROUND

In 1988, the Family Support Act transformed the program called Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) from a program to enable single mothers to stay home with their children into a mandatory work and training program. The 1988 legislation, dubbed "welfare reform", was controversial from the start and has remained so as states try to implement welfare-to-work programs, with only modest results. But, the Family Support Act was just the first of a series of "welfare reforms" that use government dollars to dictate the behavior of women on welfare. If work was the first target of the "new paternalism," the second is the family life of AFDC mothers. States are now denying additional benefits for children born to women on welfare. Other programs cut benefits to families who fail to see a doctor, to keep kids in school, and to pay the rent on time. In the name of monitoring fraud, some states now fingerprint welfare mothers. Additionally, the current welfare debate centers around how to impose a two-year limit on participation in the program.

### III. MYTH AND FACTS

**MYTH: Women on welfare have large families.**

**FACT:** The typical welfare family is a mother and two children, slightly less than the size of the average family in the United States. Forty-two per cent of AFDC families have only one child, thirty per cent have two. In the 1980's, AFDC covered less than 60% of poor children in the U.S., down from 80% in the early 1970's.

**COMMENT:** *AFDC families, like other families in the U.S., are getting smaller.*

**MYTH: Welfare mothers live "high on the hog."**

**FACT:** The average welfare benefit for a family of 3 was \$367 a month in 1993 or \$4400 a year. This is almost \$6900 less than the \$ 11,600 federal poverty line for a family of three. Most AFDC families are worse off today than in 1975. The real (after inflation) value of the AFDC grant fell 45% from 1972-1993, 26% if Food Stamps are counted. In no state in the union do food stamp and welfare benefits together lift a family of three out of poverty. The average combined state AFDC and Food Stamp benefit was only 65% of poverty in 1993; in only 4 states was it even 80% of poverty. Meanwhile, during the 1980's, the average pretax income of the richest 20% of all families rose 77%, while that of the poorest 20% declined by nine percent.

**COMMENT:** *Instead of helping poor women and children live high on the hog, AFDC keeps mother-only families living in poverty. But government programs do not have to keep people poor. Cross-national studies show that U.S. income support programs lifted less than 5% of single mothers with children out of poverty in the 1980's, compared to 89% in the Netherlands, 81% in Sweden, 75% in the United Kingdom, 50% in France, 33% in Germany, and 18.3% in Canada. Still others can not work due to illness, disability or lack of education and job skills.*

**MYTH: Welfare recipients are lazy and do not want to work.**

**FACT:** Of the 14 million AFDC recipients, only 4.5 million are adults, 90% of whom are women - many mothers of the young children. In nearly 60% of welfare homes, the youngest child is under 6 years of age; under age two in 30% of the homes. Many welfare mothers combine work and welfare, concurrently or sequentially. Still others want to work but cannot find a job (10% of all single mothers are unemployed) or cannot find jobs that pay enough. (The \$4.25 an hour minimum wage is \$1.75 an hour less than the \$6.00 an hour needed to keep a family of three out of poverty.)

**COMMENT:** *If work paid enough, fewer people would need welfare. If taking care of one's own children was defined as "work", all mothers would be considered to be working. According to a recent calculation, their labors would be worth at least \$17,000.*

**MYTH: Few women on welfare are white.**

**FACT:** Of all AFDC mothers, 38.8% are African-American, 38.1 % are white, 17.4 % are Latina, 2.8% are Asian, 1.3% are Native American, and 1.6% are of unknown race.

**COMMENT:** *Women of color are overrepresented among those on welfare because they are overrepresented among the poor. The idea that AFDC is a program primarily for women of color is used to mask the fact that so many AFDC mothers are white, to divide women from each other, and to make welfare a tool in the politics of race.*

**MYTH: Once on welfare always on welfare. Welfare is a trap from which few escape.**

**FACT:** More than 70% of women on welfare stay on the rolls for less than two years and only 8% stay on for more than eight years. While many return to AFDC for a period of time within five years, due to renewed family crisis or job loss, research on intergenerational welfare use has not been able to establish that daughters of welfare mothers necessarily end up on welfare too. Some do, some do not.

**COMMENT:** *The biggest cause of welfare seems to be poverty. It is very hard for children of poor women to escape poverty, especially in the current economy with its falling wages and rising unemployment. It's hard to work your way out of poverty. People working at minimum wage jobs earn less than \$9000 a year. Employers pay women 70 cents for every dollar earned by men.*

**MYTH: Setting a time limit on welfare participation is needed to get AFDC mothers to work.**

**FACT:** Since many AFDC mothers already work when they can, time limits are unnecessary and unduly primitive. Getting tough on welfare may win votes but it hurts poor women. Some time limit proposals acknowledge the need for adequate job training, child care, and health insurance. But in reality, even if they were to be funded, all of the supports in the world won't produce a job at a living wage.

**COMMENT:** *Time limits, with or without, job training and social supports just move welfare mothers further up the ever longer line of people looking for work. With time limits, women on welfare will become more qualified, unemployed workers or displace the already employed. Instead of mandatory work for welfare mothers, we need an expanding domestic economy and a government commitment to job creation. Without adequate work, all of the time limit proposals - however generous the supports - are merely more sophisticated measures to punish women for their poverty.*

**MYTH: Women on welfare have "kids for money". Eliminating AFDC will put an end to non-marital births.**

**FACT:** Despite years of research, studies have found no link between the AFDC grant and births outside of marriage. Indeed, non-marital births are no more frequent in high benefit states and no greater in states with rising grant levels than in states with flat or falling AFDC payments. The states provide about \$79 a month per additional child. Like the AFDC mother, the average taxpayer also receives an annual grant for children -- the tax deduction for dependents. No one claims that taxpayers have more children just to reduce their taxes.

**COMMENT:** *Neither AFDC nor the tax deduction for dependent children are rewards for having children. Rather, these income supplements recognize the value of children to society and the high cost of raising children. The U.S. is the only industrial nation other than South Africa and Japan that does not provide families with an automatic grant for every child. Moreover, pregnancies reflect complex human factors, not calculated economic decisions.*

**MYTH: The AFDC program is costly and bloated, has enlarged the deficit and deepened the recession.**

**FACT:** The federal and state governments together spent \$24.9 billion on welfare in 1992. The federal share amounted to 1% of the \$1.3 trillion Federal budget. The State share equaled 3.4% of the average state budget. Ninety percent of the AFDC budget is spent on benefits; 10% on administrative costs.

**COMMENT:** *The costs of AFDC can be compared to the \$300 billion in tax dollars received by the Department of Defense and the billions spent on the savings and loan bail out.*

**MYTH: Mandatory programs are needed to get the welfare poor to behave properly.**

**FACT:** Mandatory programs do not work very well. Workfare has produced only modest, if any, increases in employment and earnings, mandatory programs do not fare any better than voluntary ones. A recent study of California's GAIN program found that workfare participants earned an average of \$271 more per year than non-participants and received \$281 a year less in welfare and, in San Diego gains receded over time. A University of Wisconsin study found that Learnfare (the program which docks up to \$200 a month from a welfare mother's check if her children miss school without an acceptable excuse) failed to improve the school attendance of welfare children, but did exacerbate pre-existing family problems. Docking checks because welfare children have not received their immunization shots, does not take into account that poor neighborhoods have few doctors and that public health programs often are cut when government budgets are reduced.

**COMMENT:** *Mandatory programs imply that the poor will not work, marry, plan their families, send their children to school, or take them to the doctor unless the government makes them do so. Supporters of mandatory programs for the poor are often the same people who argue that the government should "get off people's backs." But, when it comes to the poor, especially poor women, they support government telling people what to do and how to live.*

**MYTH: If poor women only married, they would not be poor.**

**FACT:** Family composition does not cause poverty. Although two incomes are clearly better than one, the poor tend to be poor before, during, and after they tie the knot. The majority of the poor live in households with workers employed full year, full time. About sixty percent of all poor families with children and 85% of all poor married couple families with children include someone who works.

**COMMENT:** *Marriage is not an effective anti-poverty strategy for women.*

**MYTH: Female headed households are responsible for rising poverty rates.**

**FACT:** The number of female headed households has grown only slightly in recent years, but poverty rates have soared.

**COMMENT:** *Gender does not make people poor. Rather, the differential treatment of women based on gender has contributed to the povertization of women. Blaming women for rising poverty rates does, however, mask its real causes.*

**MYTH: Those who work are not poor.**

**FACT:** 9.2 million workers, or nearly seven percent of the work force, work but are poor. Almost sixty percent of all poor people live in families with a part or full time worker. Until the mid-1970's, the minimum wage lifted those who worked full-time, year round, out of poverty. Today, it leaves a three person family \$3,862 below the poverty line. The economic recovery of the 1980's brought less people out of poverty than did previous upturns - despite the increase in employment. The main reason for this was the decline in wages which canceled out some of the gains from increased work. In addition, unemployment rose from 5.5% of the labor force in 1990 to 6.7% in 1991. The expansion of the Earned Income Credit (EIC) -- a tax credit for low income working families -- in 1990 has moved low-wage workers above the poverty line. That the EIC was expanded again in the 1993 Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 reflects that work is an increasingly uncertain route out of poverty.

**COMMENT:** *For a segment of the population, the promise of the American dream, that if you work you will not be poor, has not been kept for the past 15 years.*

**MYTH: The poor are freeloaders on government programs.**

**FACT:** Forty-seven percent of the population receives some kind of direct government benefit, with 5.1% of the population receiving AFDC. In addition, the tax code provides numerous health, education, and welfare benefits to the rich and the middle class and another set of subsidies to corporations.

**COMMENT:** *Everyone's on welfare.*

Prepared for the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society by:

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**"Members In Action" Re-visited**  
(or...how do we practice what we preach?)

Many of *BCR Reports'* previous issues had a "Members in Action" column which illustrated the activist work of many BCRS members. This column has not appeared in the newsletter for quite some time, and I'd like to extend an invitation to readers to submit brief stories about activities you (or other folks you know) have engaged in relative to progressive practice. I'm especially interested in hearing from social service workers who are responding to the various "welfare reform" policies and proposals that are taking shape all over the country.

Here in Rochester, New York, a Republican County Executive has proposed several oppressive policies and programs, and is requesting waivers of federal regulations to allow him to put the programs into place. Meanwhile, the proposal to fingerprint recipients has won approval from the County legislature.

In December 1993, the local newspaper ran an editorial cartoon from the Palm Beach Post which featured two extremely pregnant "welfare mothers" complaining about how hard life is for women on welfare, along with their "six kids by six different scumbag fathers" who ran out on them. The cartoon ends by both women sharing their due dates for the babies they are currently carrying.

I wrote an unsolicited op. ed. article, using (among other sources) information from the "Scapegoating Women on Welfare" piece by Mimi Abramovitz and Frances Fox

Piven, as well as the AFDC fact sheet insert from a previous *BCR Reports*. This article was published in a Sunday edition of the paper in early January. I identified myself with not only my employment affiliation, but also as a member of the national steering committee of the BCRS.

The public response to my article was surprising. I received several letters which applauded the politics of my message, and which contained the sentiment "it's about time someone on a local level articulated this argument." I also received letters from women on public assistance, wanting to tell me their stories. I spoke with several of these women and made many referrals to EMPOWER, our local welfare rights organization. Finally, I heard from a young woman who was about to go to graduate school out of state. She had never known such an organization as BCRS existed, but she wanted to know how to hook up with BCRS members when she moved.

I have since this time had another op. ed. piece published which critiqued the newspaper's positive slant on a pilot welfare fingerprinting project in the Syracuse area. The point is, not all of us can write for publication in the *New York Times*, but we can try to publicly argue against repressive legislation disguised as "reform" on the local or state level.

And finally, another local success story.

On January 26th, the above-mentioned County Executive was quoted by the

press as saying: "We have to change the notion that welfare is here to essentially make poverty comfortable and shift to a mind-set that says poverty is unacceptable." Once again outraged, I challenged some of the students in the BSW program where I teach to connect with a welfare rights group to hold a press conference. At this press conference, I suggested that they challenge the County Executive to move in with a family on welfare for a week to see how "comfortable" it is.

The students took this idea and ran with it. A few weeks later, the public challenge made the front page. It was also the top news story on the local radio stations. The welfare rights organization found a member — Beverly Jackson — who invited this elected official to live with her and her four children. And although the County Executive declined her invitation, the local PBS television affiliate sent a reporter to live with Jackson and her kids for a week. The station subsequently produced a 30-minute documentary on the welfare reform debate. A radio station had the County Executive on a call-in program to be challenged by Jackson, which resulted in an hour-long discussion of his proposals.

There are lots of us out there successfully organizing. So let's reactivate the "Members in Action" column. Sharing tactics and strategies can help to energize all of us as we continue to "fight back." ■

*Barbara Kasper, Editor,*  
*BCR Reports*

# ***Education for Practice in Decline***

*by Richard A. Cloward*

Schools of social work affiliated with the better known universities are shifting away from training for professional practice toward a more academic model. Many lesser known schools will follow their lead. Bertha Reynolds, the preeminent teacher of professional practice, would be alarmed. I certainly am.

Leaders of this educational movement claim that social work faculty need to do more research, be more academic. No one objects to that; we need to improve our academic output. But there is more going on here than meets the eye. Under the banner of improving academic productivity, quantitative research is being extolled at the expense of qualitative research.

This distinction is important. Qualitative data are typically drawn from ongoing practice processes such as case records and field reports, so that faculty who do this kind of research are necessarily closely bound to students, practitioners, and agencies. But quantitative research tends to draw faculty away from these relationships.

Earlier generations of practice faculty draw upon their continuous involvement with agencies and practitioners as the source of data to test and advance theory as well as to enrich teaching. They spent a great deal of time visiting agencies and consulting with the agency staff who supervised students, including reading case records. They even practiced themselves. These faculty encouraged students to report in class on fieldwork experiences as

primary data in evaluating theory, and in learning practice. In this manner, every field agency was mined for data to be used in preparing practice publications.

A new generation of faculty think that qualitative data are not rigorous enough. They think they can measure things, prove things, put practice on a foundation of verified knowledge. Consequently, they are preoccupied with designing ways to refract professional practice through highly specialized observational methods, such as experimental and control groups or survey instruments. Since they distrust qualitative data, quantitative research faculty have little incentive to cull insights from the experiences of students and practitioners, whether in classroom or in fieldwork advising. Indeed, they often view practice-oriented responsibilities as distractions.

Viable social work education requires a balance of both types of research. Having rummaged around in the social sciences during my four decades of teaching and writing, I would be hard put to say that quantitative research has contributed more than qualitative research. Both methods have their virtues, and no scientific or professional enterprise can succeed which does not learn from both.

But quantitative research appears to be on the ascendancy, with unfortunate consequences for social work education. To illustrate this point, I take up the case of the Columbia University School of Social Work. From all I can learn, the changes at Columbia

are typical of those taking place among leading schools.

As I said earlier, a quantitative research emphasis draws faculty away from classrooms and field agencies. Only half of courses are now taught by full-time faculty at Columbia, and less than one-third of students have full-time faculty as fieldwork advisers. Students are disappointed to find that part-time faculty increasingly do the teaching work of the school. As for those among the full-time faculty who do teach, their diminished contact with field agencies makes them less knowledgeable about the settings where students intern, and less able to appreciate the richness of student experiences and the puzzles those experiences present.

Practice teaching competence, once a key criterion for promotion and tenure, is now little valued. A successful grant-getter can win tenure, even though being the worst teacher. Junior faculty with extensive practice and teaching competence, but lacking quantitative credentials, are being forced to leave Columbia because tenure is no longer a possibility for them. In their place, quantitative research faculty are being hired who have relatively little practice experience. No senior practice faculty have been hired for almost two decades, although a number of quantitative research faculty have been. It is not good for social work education that faculty have so little professional experience, and so limited a perspective on research.

*Continued* ➤

I add, with particular regret, that no practice method is suffering more than advocacy/organizing. To be sure, this method has never enjoyed much academic legitimacy, since it can provoke political controversy. But the legitimacy of advocacy/organizing is now being undermined all the more because it is the least susceptible of the several social work methods to quantifying research strategies. How would one contrive controlled experiments of legislative advocacy or of efforts to organize clients? Most research on advocacy/organizing relies on field reports, historical accounts, and other essentially qualitative data. These are the very sorts of research materials that now tend to be devalued, with disastrous consequences for faculty recruitment.

Columbia is a striking case in point, since it once had a national reputation for training advocacy/organizers. During the past six or seven years, however, advocacy/organizing faculty died or retired or left; at this writing, I am the only one remaining. Instead of replacing us, priority has been given to recruiting faculty who specialize in measuring things — behavior modification experiments, for example.

One result of this shift is that schools of social work are becoming more conservative. They are increasingly less willing to raise the fundamental issues of social inequality and injustice which create crime, addiction, and other human maladies, and which wreck individuals and families. Social work educators are less willing to recognize

that struggles against inequality and injustice entail conflict, not just publishing research reports.

Other traditional social work values are also being abandoned. Affirmative action suffers because the pool of senior quantitative researchers is limited, and tends to be composed disproportionately of younger white men. At Columbia, minority faculty have fallen in number from ten to three (in a faculty of about 40). There is no longer a tenured faculty member of color, although there were five as recently as 1987. Women are losing power; the last seven appointees to the full professor rank were males. And age discrimination is appearing for the first time at Columbia. Three full professors who do quantitative research were recently hired at annual salaries averaging \$20,000 more than incumbent full professors, although they average 16 years younger. Such salary practices provoked three law suits alleging age discrimination, (I filed one of them). In 40 years at Columbia, I cannot remember faculty ever suing a Dean.

If practice-oriented faculty are no longer much valued, neither are practicing

graduates. In this time of poor job prospects, more young people are seeking graduate training to improve their employment chances. Private universities are taking advantage of this situation by admitting more and more tuition-paying students (even if there is a paucity of adequate field placements), thus flooding the labor market with graduates at a time when seasoned professions are experiencing serious problems of salary and job mobility.

One hears reports from various schools that faculty who resist these trends are being denied promotion and tenure, and are even being dealt with punitively. Those of us who are committed to practice education need support. Many of us are struggling unsuccessfully against the transformation that is now under way in social work education. It would help greatly if concerned social workers were to begin raising questions through alumni association, at conferences, and in journals and newsletters. Advocacy/organizing is especially at peril, and cannot be saved without a mobilization by those who value it. ■

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### ***Guide to Political Videos Available***

Guide to Political Videos, published biannually by Pacifica Communications, is the only comprehensive resource of the latest political videos. The premier issue featured more than 400 listings covering the politics of the environment, foreign policy, gay and lesbian issues, health care, the peace movement and women's issues, just to name a few. Included is a synopsis of the video and full bibliographic and ordering information. For ordering information (Individuals and Organizations pay \$10.00, Public Institutions pay \$15.00 plus postage costs) call or write: Pacifica Communications, P.O. Box 4426, Santa Barbara, CA 93140, 805-965-5873.

## **Teach-In on Welfare Reform to be Held at Fordham University**

On Saturday, June 11, 1994, a teach-in entitled "The Politics of Welfare Reform: Not for the Poor Alone" will be held at Fordham University, 113 West 60th Street (at Columbus Avenue) in the 12th Floor Faculty Lounge.

Speaking will be Mimi Abramovitz, Richard Cloward, Frances Fox Piven, and Megan McLaughlin. In addition there will be workshops on: "Welfare Reform and the Politics of Hate;" "The Welfare Rights Movement Today;" "Welfare Advocacy and the Social Services;" "Welfare, Jobs, and the Economy: Workfare or Fair Work?" and "Alternative Family Policies." There will also be testimony from welfare workers and welfare recipients, a speak out, and more!

Sponsoring Organizations are: NYC Chapter NASW; Social Workers for Peace and Justice; Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service; Bertha Capen Reynolds Society; Alliance of Hispanic Social Workers; Association of Black Social

### **WANTED: Social Workers For Peace**

Cia Verschelden, a social work faculty member at Kansas State University, is doing research on the activities of social workers around peace issues. She is gathering accounts of social workers who are working for peace at personal, local, state, national and international levels. Please write or call her if you or a social worker you know is doing peace work. Dr. Verschelden can be reached at 250 Waters Hall Manhattan, KS 66506-4003, 913-532-4977.

Workers, Fordham University Chapter and the Social Service Workers Action Network.

Advanced registration by May 31st is strongly recommended. Registration is \$5.00; free for students and low income people. Send note indicating workshop preferences (first three, in order

of preference) and if applicable. \$5.00 checks payable to the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society to: Marti Bombyk, Graduate School of Social Service, Fordham University at Lincoln Center, 113 W. 60th Street, New York, NY 10023-7479. For more information call (212) 636-6651.

### **UE-IUP Fact Sheet On Privatization**

*Submitted by Iowa BCRS Chapter member, Dan Kelly*

The push to privatize public services has exploded onto the national scene like never before. All across the country, at the federal, state and local level, public employees and the services they provide have been victimized by contracting out. Politicians have blamed public employees for the financial problems of government. They have encouraged the often repeated lie that "the private sector always provides services more efficiently and at a lower cost."

#### ***It's always cheaper... right?***

The primary justification for contracting out a public service is lower cost. A closer look at the track record of privatization explodes the myth. The total costs of contracting out a particular public service can be massive. These are the hidden costs of privatization, including:

- **Administrative costs:** an additional layer of bureaucracy has to be created to administer the bidding process and to monitor the contractor. Some contractors continue to use public employees to train and supervise the new private workforce.
- **Equipment costs:** Many private contractors can submit "low" bids because they will use existing equipment, buildings and supplies already paid for by the taxpayers.
- **Cancellation costs:** Many contracts with private companies include penalties and reimbursement clauses. If a government agency fires a contractor or discontinues a contract with a private firm, it might have to pay out tens of thousands of dollars to do so.
- **Low-ball bidding:** It is not uncommon for a private company to submit artificially low bids to perform a public service, in order to get a foot in the door. Once established, pressure is exerted to raise the fee far beyond the original bid.
- **Low wage bidding:** In nearly every case of contracting out, the private company utilizes a lower paid workforce. Poverty wages are not uncommon. A poorly paid and trained workforce cannot deliver high quality public services.
- **Corruption:** Privatizing public services invites corruption. Corruption is the predictable, unfortunate result when public services are essentially "For Sale."
- **Loss of public accountability:** Private contractors are insulated from public control and oversight. The open, democratic nature of public services is undermined. Companies provide services to make a profit, not to serve the public.

***It's clear — privatization costs more!***

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<p><b>Social Work &amp; Social Living</b>                      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.</p>		List Price \$8.95 Member Price \$8.00	
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<p><b>Uncharted Journey</b>                      Reynolds' inspirational autobio-graphy dedicated to "young social workers who are facing realities and shaping our profession with courage and creativity." Covers the development of her practice philosophy and the course of her career from 1914-1964. Softbound.</p>		List Price \$21.95 Member Price \$20.00	
<p><b>The Years Have Spoken</b>                      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.</p>		List Price \$12.95 Member Price \$12.00	
<p><b>Regulating the Lives of Women</b>                      Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present  <i>Mimi Abramovitz</i>                      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.</p>		List Price \$17.95 Member Price \$16.00	
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