

Book Reviews

Journal of Progressive Human Services Vol 1. 1 1990, M Abramovits, M. Bombyk (eds) Haworth Press Inc, New York.
(Subscriptions on a per volume calendar year basis.)

This is the first volume of the biannual *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, which lays claim to being the only US Journal using a "progressive framework to examine political, professional and personal issues in the human services".

The Journal was published just before the demise of East European Socialism. Leonard, in one of the articles "Contesting the Welfare State in a Neo Conservative Era," examines the growing dilemma of the left as how to remain critical of the Liberal Welfare State without giving further support to the Right in confronting for example, a neo conservative era in UK and the advent of glasnot. Thus Leonard argues that some who belong to the Left have begun to look more sceptically at the highly centralized socialist state as opposed to the rights of the individual, decentralisation and participation as well as pluralism. He sees the analysis of past problems of the old welfare state and an understanding of the ideological successes of the right (increased attention to the rights of the individual and expanding real individual choice) as providing one basis for a new progressive politics of social welfare.

Despite the Journal's determination to be "progressive" at all costs and the therefore somewhat restrictive choice of material reflecting the jargon and ideology of the so called "Left", I found it made interesting reading, covering a number of topics even within its ideological limitations.

The Journal itself is a successor to *Catylst - the socialist Journal of the Social Services* which was started in 1978 by a group of radical social workers in New York City, on a voluntary basis. Its aim is to develop knowledge that reflects and responds to progressive concerns and it incorporates in this volume six articles, including those from Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Peter Leonard (as mentioned), and others on "Rethinking Empowerment", "Culturally Transmitted traumatic Stress in an Appalachian Community", "Social Control and Community Care" and "Labour Negotiations in Battered Wives' Programmes".

The Journal also features a column "from the Archives" which "preserves the progressive heritage by featuring reprints of significant articles and documents from the past". Lastly there is a selection of Book Reviews.

Freire's article, "A Critical Understanding of Social Work", a paper delivered at the IFSW Conference in 1988, discusses the qualities of (again) a progressive social worker, learnt, Freire claims, from his social work students and colleagues in Recife, Rio and Sao Paulo at the end of the 40's and early 50's. His theoretical contribution in any case remains a strong one with Freire, himself an educator, reminding us that social work practice is substantively educational, "pedagogical" and political with the social worker not just a technical neutral agent, compartmentalized from the wider social context.

Levy Simon re-examines the concept of empowerment in another useful article. Empowerment has become one of the most popularly evoked concepts in social work theory and practice in the 80s but often fails to fully address the dilemma of how professional help can aid in another's independence especially over the issues of official authority and dependency.

Levy draws an ontological distinction between "empowering people" and "helping people empower themselves", one possibility of which he sees as through a "collaborative alliance" with the social work professional. Compatibility of interests between client and worker cannot always, however, be assumed.

Another paper by Cattell-Gordon which starts off as a case study of one of his former students who committed suicide, explores the Appalachian inheritance where distinct patterns of exploitation are seen as having shaped cultural tendencies similar to clinical manifestations of groups experiencing traumatic stress.

Labour and Trade Union negotiations in collectively orientated workplaces (20 Battered Wives Programmes in US and Canada), is the subject of the next paper, where "consensual bargaining" is seen as offering a model for unionization of other small "feminized" service organisations.

A final article takes issue with the traditional view of community mental health as a self determinate system characterized by care, treatment and control based in the community, as opposed to more segregative forms of treatment/control prevailing since World War 2.

An historical and political analysis is made of the process of social control identifying processes that link community mental health in the post war period to "basic tendencies of US capitalist formation". Nevertheless the authors say it is a mistake not to recognise that the practice still contains the possibility of real care and change as well as regulation and control, and sees some possibility of collective action in the face of decaying services and increasing social control.

"From the Archives" features Jacob Fisher in the 1930's describing the development of the social work movement called the "rank and file", whose 15 000

membership emerged as a response to social and economic conditions in the US during the depression. Fisher, himself a Jewish social worker from New York, went on to become the first editor of their journal, *Social Work Today*.

Finally three books are reviewed by Assistant Professors or Professors of well known US University Schools of Social Work. The books again reflect the Journal's typical subject preferences and include: *Social workers and Labour Unions* (1988), H Karger; *The National Welfare Rights Movement (The Social Protest of Poor Women)* (1981), G West; and *The Future of Work* (1987) G and E Gil (eds).

While the Journal is well presented and discusses some issues of real concern, personally I found a lot of it to be rather "old hat" and almost more of historical interest, despite its relentless claim to be "progressive".

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In Defence of Socialism. Four Speeches on the 30th Annivesary of the Cuban Revolution, 1989, Fidel Castro, (edited by Mary-Alice Waters), Pathfinder Press, London, 142pp, Price £4,95 pbk.

This is a collection of four rousing, polemical speeches by Fidel Castro to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. There is an introduction by Mary-Alice Waters. The English translations were originally published in *Granma Weekly Review*. The speeches were delivered to different audiences in Cuba between December 5th 1988 and January 1989.

The titles of the speeches indicate their orientation: "As long as the empire exists we will never lower our guard". "The Cuban people will always remain loyal to the principles of socialism"; "Thirty years of the Cuban Revolution;" and "The young generation must improve and defend socialism".

Castro describes both the revolutionary nationalist war to overthrow the Batista regime, and the subsequent economic revolution to transform the capitalist economy. He fully acknowledges the difficulties faced en route, in the face of imperialist aggression and antagonism, and, in particular, the continuing US blockade. He exhibits the ferve, charisma and moral principle that have characterised his leadership.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the speeches do not give any detailed analysis of the problems facing Cuba, including bureaucracy, corruption, technoc