STACK 3

THE BEST OF CASE CON

-ISSUE 25-

EDITORIAL

This is the 25th and final issue of CASE CON, presenting a collection of articles and cartoons from previous issues and serving as a launching platform for a new magazine, provisionally called PUBLIC CON - A New Magazine for Welfare State Workers.

We must apologise to all our readers who have been wondering what has happened to CASE CON, but putting the decision (tentatively promoted in the last issue) into practice has been difficult and taken a great deal of time.

The first editorials defined CASE CON as a forum for revolutionary and radical social workers with the twin objectives of developing a radical critique of social work practice and training, and creating an organisation capable of translating this critique into action.

Initially the critique took the form of analysing the role of social work in the capitalist system, attacking the professional elitism of BASW and encouraging students on training courses to fight for some control over course content.

In terms of translating words into deeds there was much debate about whether BASW and/or NALGO was the most effective body to work within. It was not until issue number 8 that the possibility of working in BASW was completely rejected, and the development of rank-and-file trade union militancy called for. The Case Con approach was now broadly defined and most of the articles continued to explore these two arenas of critique and action.

It was a hard job trying to devise criteria for selecting articles for the present issue, and even harder actually selecting the articles. Choosing cartoons was also difficult, and at one point we seriously considered doing a CASE CON Cartoon Book. (Maybe one day!)

The articles chosen are a fair representation of CASE CON and its development up to No 21 (Winter '75). They also stand the test of time favourably. Issues in some articles were hotly debated, but not well argued and many were extremely time bound. Articles from recent issues have not been included because they are still readily available. Some of the lengthier articles have been cut carefully, ensuring that the original meaning has been preserved (along with the spelling, typing and grammatical errors.)

"Ideology of Casework and Professionalism" is still a brilliant tour de force (despite being cut drastically) and was later reproduced in a book entitled "Counter Course: A Handbook of Course Criticism". "Perspectives on Case Con" stands as a marxist analysis of the position of social workers in the capitalist system. "Antidote to Bolshevism" analyses the role of social worke by taking a critical look at its origins. "Litter Sell-Out" helps to make sense of Seebahm reorganisation by making nonsense of it. "By Whose Authority" gets out the microscope and looks at social workers' relationships with their colleagues and superiors and the significance of these for relationships with clients - an article guaranteed to make many a revolutionary social worker squirm uncomfortably in the armchair.

In the search for an alternative to traditional casework, welfare rights work seemed the ideal candidate, and many people were surprised with the firmness with which this was argued against in articles such as "Know Your Wrongs". In the same issue a new statement of aims was being called for in the editorial as a result of a conference decision. Case Con had established its general approach but there were all sorts of views and half-baked theories flying about, some of which had been expressed in Case Con, some at conferences, and others erroneously attributed to Case Con by various ill-informed commentators. There was a need for a more defined policy statement. The Case Con Manifesto finally appeared 18 months later in "Course Con" (a handbook of course criticism). It was a revised and modified version of a draft produced by Liverpool Case Con. This is the first time this definitive and comprehensive statement has appeared in the pages of CASE CON proper, although it has received limited additional exposure through being printed in the useful but dubious "Radical Social Work". (Ed. Bailey and Brake.)

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There are three condensed articles from the Womens Issue, (No 15), the first of the magazines in the subject-format. "Training for Clients" is an hilarious satire on professionalism. "The Turotial Game" also looks at the casework process from a different angle, with students as clients. Social work can be viewed in very muddled ways and used in very curious way as demonstrated in "Soft Cops" and "Iron Fists, Kid Gloves". Residential homes get looked at in "Home for Deviants" and "Sugar and Spice". Finally, the comprehensive "Local Authority Community Workers" explores the by now familiar dilemma of being a radical activist in your day-to-day work.

The twin objectives stated in the first issue of CASE CON have been explored and in some measure achieved. Over the past seven years large chuncks of the social work "profession" have become detached from the liberal/professional/middle-class model of the social worker and his/her world, where pretentious professional considerations came first and 'politics' left to the super-professionals in BASW. Increasingly social workers are seeing themselves as local government workers doing a job that is narrowly defined by the state, where fighting for better conditions and a better service are both seen as struggles to be fought for through trade union activity. Many of the earlier critical planks of Case Con are now generally accepted by a large number of social workers, and the editorial collective has more and more cast its critical eye beyond the boundaries of social work. Now is the time to launch out in a new direction.

THE IDEOLOGY OF CASEWORK & PROFESSIONALISM

Emphasis on individual inadequacy and on social or environmental conditions have always been interwoven in social work theory and practice. Their relative predominance can be related to more basic social and economic conditions (see Ben Stone Case Con 2). The identification of social work with individual casework in the fifties coincides with a new optimism in the affluence of society under capitalism, and people who remained poor or homeless or unemployed were seen as individual failures in a society that offered opportunities of prosperity to everyone.

At this time social work was at last becoming established as a respectable profession; the concern with psychiatric methods dissociates social work finally from any reformist or socialist or political attitudes or tradition, and on the other hand abolishes the image of social workers as lady bountifuls dispensing charity. Casework breaks the links with social work's shady past, it establishes it as a profession in its own right, and it serves a convenient conservative function by locating troubles in the individual rather than in the social and economic situation within which he lives.

The strong consensus among social work teachers makes unqualified, "homely", "common sense" discussions possible. There is no need for rigorous definitions of terms or concepts if there is a basic agreement as to what they refer to, and while it is assumed that there is no one who is going to attack on an intellectual or logical level, except in matters of detail. Indeed the idea that what might be taught is "theory" is often not considered at all, and instead the principles of, for example, ego-psychology are put forward as how things "really" are. But because the basis of the philosophy or theory of casework is not clarified, a "way in" is difficult to find if a challenge is to be made. Undefined terms are difficult to contest.

The question of values, and different alternative sets of values, is not raised. The client is seen as irrationally motivated; he cannot have values or demands that can seriously be considered as alternatives. While students are encouraged to learn about the cultural background that clients come from - i.e. working-class culture, little is said about the social worker's own values, about the middle-class background from which most social workers come. Training, in any case, is seen as neutralising any value biases that social workers might have, so that the social worker is "freed" from the constraints imposed by values. But the question of whether it is possible to view the world without values in a purely objective way is not discussed.

Although social workers talk of accepting the client as a unique person, in his interaction with the social worker, he is forced into the role of client, which corresponds to the stereotype the social worker holds of the "client". The individual cleint is seen in terms of this role, which means that certain features of his condition or behaviour or past history are selected as significant, and others recede in importance. The role connates certain things about the "client", that he is inadequate in personal relations, that he will become dependent on the social worker, that he has not yet come to terms with his "real" self, and the client will find it difficult to shake off these connotations if he remains in the relationship with the social worker. No attention is paid to the times when he has coped admirably with his problems, let alone the vast majority of his time when he has behaved utterly normally.

The basic question here is what motivates the social worker when he deals with a client. Why does he discount the overt, 'presenting' problem, and substitute quite a different framework to explain the client's past and present behaviour, and avoid giving quick material aid which is often all that is demanded in the first place? I suggest that the basis of the social worker's motivation lies in the professionalisation of social work.

Any profession acquires recognition and legitimacy by being the unique bearer of a particular body of expertise, which requires a period of training and evidence of qualification. The particular body of knowledge that forms the core of professional social work is that peculiar amalgam of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, sociology and psychology that makes up casework.

Casework is the essence of professional social work; it distinguishes the young, trained social worker from the older, experienced but untrained social worker; it distinguishes social workers from other "helping" professions and bodies - doctors, churches, psychiatrists,

Citizens' Advice Bureaux - and gives the trained social worker a feeling of superior insight over social workers of dubious status, like community workers. But most importantly it dissociates social work at last from its historial links with reformism, political action and charity.

Thus, casework is important as it serves to legitimate social work as a separate profession, by explaining that it provides a very special kind of insight into a problem situation, into what has "really" happened, and what is "really" needed. It also declares the sanction of objectivity, and in the next breath of a mystical intuition.

But this personal emphasis serves to obscure the fact that social and economic anomalies continue to exist. It blinds the social worker to the situation of clients as viewed collectively, and to the simple recognition of poverty as a structural phenomenon, rather than as an individual misfortune. In this way, the practice of casework also serves to prevent the full exploitation by clients of what is available under the "welfare state", as it redirects the client's and social worker's attention to the client's personality, even his childhood, and away from his economic and social rights.

Conventional social workers, then, can be said to serve a "cooling out" function insofar as clients are dissuaded from seeing the overall contradictions of the rent and housing system, the employment and unemployment situations, and the wage structure. It is in this sense that the social worker may be said to be an agent of social control, for he prevents the client from grasping the totality of his situation in social and economic terms, from experiencing solidarity and sympathy with other clients. In this sense casework is a ruling class ideology, for it protects the social and economic systems by redirecting radical criticism and preventing solidarity.

Since the Human Growth and Development course and case discussions based on this perspective is really the core of professional training, the social worker is motivated to classify clients in these terms (that is, those of ego models of psychology), to select features stressed as central in the models of development, because the use of this framework confirms the professionalism of the social worker. In other words, the social worker is motivated to discover latent underlying problems, to focus on emotional relationships, particularly in childhood, and to discover unconscious motives in the client, because in so doing, the social worker is demonstrating his professional status.

Not only is he demonstrating his professionalism to other social workers, but he is also rewarding himself in discovering what the client "really" wants, what is "really" wrong.

Thinking on the socio-economic level tends to be unsophisticated, and statements about political formations are usually based on individual psychology. Social work cannot make the transition from individual psychology to sociological thinking, except by basing the social on the psychological:- political behaviour, class formations, rules and laws tend to be explained by reducing them to the psychology of the individuals who make them up.

In this way, political behaviour, rules, laws, institutions are not in themselves problematic: what is problematic are the individuals involved, for each case is unique. So the content and form of social and political institutions are not discussed, except in terms of the latent psychological processes.

Social work literature frequently acknowledges that clients come to notice because they fail to measure up to society's rules - a good beginning if the content and purposes of the rules were examined. The question of "who is the client?" might become clearer if social workers asked "who makes the rules and for whose benefit?". Instead of seeing rules as upholding certain class interests, they see them all too often in the "social contract" manner, whereby rules are thought necessary, however unpleasant they may be, because they prevent society from falling into anarchy. Thus, rules exist to benefit everyone, and the constraints they place on individual behaviour are in the common good in the long run. They content of rules is not examined, nor are they seen as existing to benefit some people more than others.

Peter Leonard points out that social work thinking is based on an equilibrium, consensus model of society, which means that social control is seen as the limiting of actions in people's own interest, as there is a basic sharing of values. A conflict model would see social control in terms of limiting individuals' behaviour in the interests of dominant groups in society. Thus the idea that the social worker helps the client to achieve "insight" himself essentially mystifies a powerful controlling relationship.

Alternative Directions

Finally I shall discuss alternative directions to conventional social work - radical social work, community work. However, firstly I shall consider how seemingly radical alternatives to casework are made acceptable to establishment social work, and their more progressive elements forced into exile.

Young social workers are increasingly becoming dissatisfied with traditional methods of social work and with the services they are supposed to be administering. Increasingly they find it inappropriate to identify the causes of clients' troubles in personal troubles of the psyche, especially as it is becoming more and more apparent that the "welfare state" has not revolutionised society, or even secured a marginal redistribution of income. But even though "community development", or "community work" are terms increasingly in vogue, the extent to which social workers can espouse these forms of social work is limited.

The professional social worker has a wide area of control over his relations with individual clients, over his casework skills. But he has very little control over the other aspects of his work; preventive work to be effective would mean control over housing and wage situations, control which is obviously not forthcoming. Thus the social worker may be more or less forced to fall back on casework, even though both he and the client feel this to be an innapropriate form of help. Casework practice at least reduces some of the frustrations, for the social worker can feel that in discussing the problems, he is playing some part in solving them. Another barrier to social workers attempting to exert pressure in the appropriate places, the Ministry of Social Security, Housing Department and so on, or to thinking that clients' problems may be better dealt with in, for example, a claimants' union, tenants' association, trade union, black power group or squatters' association, is of course the fact that social workers are employed by the authority in which they work. The social worker is risking his job and career if he takes his radical critique too far in practice.

So social workers themselves need protection and in order to fight for more control over their conditions of work they themselves should seek involvement in the trade union movement.

YOU ARE NOW FULLY QUALIFIED TO SERVE AT THE SHRINE

Many social workers see community development programmes as a radical alternative to traditional casework practice, but these establishment-sponsored programmes do not differ in their conceptions of society and of problems from those held by caseworkers. They seek to mobilise resources for self-help in the community, and can be said to be reactionary insofar as they seek to channel local discontent into legitimate organisations, who are supposed to "participate" in local affairs. This serves a useful function by preventing illegitimate, militant local action.

Community development sufters from two other shortcomings: the spot-lighting of particular problem areas at the expense of seeing the whole organisation of society as problematic, and secondly the naive belief that local groups can in fact control their own destinies. They draw attention away from the problem of income distribution in society. The focus on particular areas or problems serves to obscure the view of poverty or bad housing as integral parts of capitialist society. The pretence that local groups can effect some change in the distribution of resources ignores the real power relationships in society which determine the allocation of resources.

Since community work is (with reluctance in some quarters) becoming acceptable, and indeed seen as evidence of "progressiveness" in the social work profession, its conservative functions should be stressed. However, this is not to say that it is not a better alternative to traditional casework, because at least it does turn some attention to the environment, and to others who share a common situation, so that a basis for solidarity is set up, that could, under changing circumstances, form a foundation for militant action. Another vital function the community worker can perform is the advising of the public of their rights and how to get them.

But in the final analysis, the community worker can only achieve a radical orientation if he openly takes a political stand, and similarly if groups in the community become political, concerned with what goes on outside the community, at the top levels of society. Groups which pretend to be non-political are merely disguising their middle-class nature, their unwillingness to really get to grips

with class relations. If social workers are to become political, then they must rid themselves of ideas of the "professional" remaining detached from issues, and of the reluctance to take direct action, and should start seeing themselves like other workers who need strength and solidarity in a trade union, not a professional association, if they are to have any control over their work. In this way social workers could stand together with their clients, indeed dropping the idea of client-professional relationship, and this could be the first step towards a truly radical social work. For radical social work should encompass the possibilities for radical or revolutionary change in the structure of our society. Real change cannot be effected by isolated reformers at the top of society, but can only come about by pressure from the mass of people at the base of society. Thus social workers if they espouse radical hopes, must ally themselves not with those who are powerful in the middle and upper classes, as they have traditionally done, but with the working class which is the only class whose interests are uncompromisingly opposed to those of capitalism. This change in the role of social workers is of course virtually impossible to achieve by a simple switching of allies, but an involvement of social workers in the trade union movement, a concerted attack on the ideology behind social work theory and practice, and a commitment to real change from below, would be the beginning of a radical social work which no longer served the interests of the dominant order via the claims of "professionalism".

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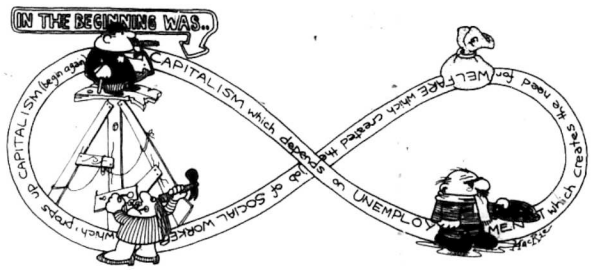
CRESCY CANNAN

perspectives for CASE CON

The debate on the limitations and possibilities of radical social work, its relevance to trade union organisations and the struggle for socialism can usefully be approached by starting from the Case Con statement of aims. Clause 1 commits us to a belief in working class struggle as the means of achieving socialism. Clauses 2 and 3 commit us to the support of social work involvement with "grass roots organisations such as claimants' unions and tenants' associations" as well as the reorientation of training courses, enabling them to focus "on the social worker's contribution to change through involvement in concrete forms of social action". The question not faced here is how far these aims are reconcilable. Are social workers and their clients, and the organisations through which they work (trade unions and community action groups) marginal or central to the achievement of socialism?

Secondly, social workers are part of the state apparatus which, in any class society, exists to protect the interests of the ruling class. Social work plays an important ideological role in society by encouraging the belief that complex problems directly caused by capitalism are amenable to social work solutions. It also, of course, plays a particular headshrinking role with individual clients. The state itself, however, is not without internal contradictions and to the extent that social workers become conscious of both their ideological and headshrinking roles both will be undermined. Again, therefore, social workers can find themselves in a contradictory position, being both part of the apparatus of repression and, when radicalised, contributing to its undermining.



TRAINEES - APPRENTICESHIP OR CHEAP LABOUR?

Three points must be considered here.

First, social workers like teachers and nurses, are not directly involved in the production of wealth. They are not therefore directly exploited in the same way as workers engaged in productive labour. Since the taxes required to finance the social services come directly from surplus value, i.e. that part of their labour for which workers are not paid, social service employees live off the surplus value extracted from productive workers. In one sense therefore their interests are opposed, but on the other hand social services are part of the price capitalism has to pay for labour, using up resources that would otherwise be available for investment. In this sense the demands of the working class for improved social services and the demands of employees within those services coincide. However this apparent contradiction is resolved it remains clear that the industrial strength of social workers is minimal. Coal miners can stop production. Social workers cannot.

Thirdly, social workers come mainly into contact with the less well organised sections of the working class - the unemployed, women, the old, the disabled the ill. However radicalised most social work clients are relatively powerless. They can be part of, but not central to, the class struggle. Their politicisation may be important in so far as their traditional lack of class consciousness has militated against its development among organised productive workers (e.g. the strike breaking tendency of women, derived from their isolation in the home). As Michael Barratt-Brown writes: (Socialist Register 1971 page 205)

"It will not be by the very poor and the dropouts that the welfare state is dissolved and replaced by socialism, however much these groups may reveal of its nature."

In short, the class position of social workers, their place in the state apparatus and, most of all, the class position of their clients lead to the conclusion

that social workers, acting either on their own or their clients' behalf, are marginal to the struggle for socialism, despite their potential importance in the battle of ideas.

A perspective for Case Con must then start by reaffirming the essential points in Clause 1 of our statement of aims. Capitalism today in Britain and elsewhere is in a state of crisis, the most obvious symptoms of which are unemployment, industrial stagnation and the attempts of Governments to curb the industrial and political power of the working class. Resistence to this attempted repression is growing and it is the working class who are in the front line of this resistance. It is their organisation which alone can transform defensive battles against the system into an offensive leading to its destruction.

Case Con supporters should therefore consider future activity and organisation on the following lines:-

i) We reject not only conventional social work but also that school of "radical" social work which believes that the organisation of consumer groups in the social services is by itself a viable alternative solution. Such "radicals" arrogantly reject and ignore the history and forms of organisation of the working class.

ii) We reject "dropping out" and we believe that the central task of Case Con is to organise as part of the labour movement, rank and file social workers in local authority and other statutory agencies.

iii) We support, as part of this activity, trade union militancy among social workers on such questions as control of agency policies, reduced caseloads, principled stands on questions like refusal to accept children into care because of homelessness, and subversion, e.g. provision of information to client organisations. This sort of activity cannot be sustained without effective trade unions organisation and alliance with other groups of workers, e.g. through NALGO action.

iv) We must continue to develop our critique of the dominant ideas of social work from a socialist perspective and work towards the democratisation of social work courses.

v) Whatever their limitations we must give all possible support to militant consumer groups and work towards the creation of links between them and existing working class organisations.

Our fundamental aim therefore is as much the liberation of the social worker as the client. Social workers organised in trade unions can play a part, alongside industrial workers, in both the long-term battle for socialism and the immediate tasks of defending those who engage in valid, if limited, radical or subsersive activity.

BOB DEACON

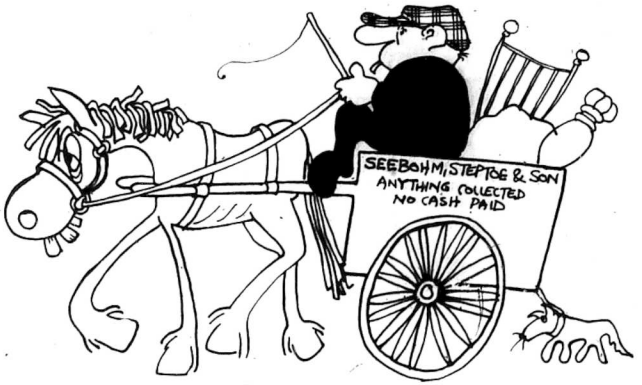
STRUGGLE OVER STANDBY

LITTER SELL-OUT

our man on the cart reports.....

Disturbing reports have been coming in from Cleansing Departments throughout the country concerning last year's re-organisation. Although greeted with enthusiasm by the vast majority of workers throughout the cleansing world, this has since proven to be a mistake. For those few of you not aware of the background, the story really begins with the Streetbin Report on the whole field of cleansing and waste disposal. In the immortal words of Streetbin himself: " What we are providing is carts, not cash. I have always felt that too much emphasis has been placed on the money side of things, although I do of course have plenty myself." What in fact was proposed by the far-sighted Streetbin was an amalgamation of all the waste disposal services into larger and more efficient units. Where once you had completely separate departments dealing in general litter, bottles and broken glass, and old abandoned or broken down motor vehicles, the country was now going to have a generic waste disposal service, which was street based and community oriented. Area teams would be sent out to the face head on the very causes of litter production and were expected to develop new and exciting methods of actually preventing litter occurring, as well as keeping the old-fashioned methods of litter collection and disposal - known in the trade as cartwork. Back-up services would be available for litter which could not be dealt with in the community, in the form of storage buildings where it was hoped that it could be recycled into something useful.

Unfortunately, Streetbin's plans seem to have gone sadly awry. One oversight seems to have been the lack of job satisfaction in the new set-up. In the words of a spokesman: "Some of the lads were quite happy doing bottles and just don't want to know about old motor cars and such. The same goes for the general litter boys - they've had no training in bottle work, but are expected to do it not only in the day, but at night as well." One group is keeping cool in the situation and even seems to favour the new departments at times; and that is the professional body of the cleansing world, the Tradesmens Union for Refuse Disposal (TURD), which only professionally qualified operatives may join. In a leading article in its organ "Sewage Works Today", TURD says: "Surely what we are offering the community is a golden opportunity to clear up its own litter, by the greatly increased accessibility of cleansing workers with their store of professional know-how and expertise. Not only will this save the country money, but will mystify the population as to the root causes of litter and enable the modern cleansing worker to at last gain professional status." Unfortunately, TURD does not reflect the feelings of the majority of cleansing workers, whose union, the General Association of Rubbish Bin and Garbage Employees (GARBAGE) is becoming daily more aware of its members' intolerable working conditions and is at this very moment fighting on behalf of members being asked to tow away broken down jalopies in the middle of the night. In fact a group of radicals, concerned with the wider aspects of litter, called CART-CON, has formed to fight the very social system which entails the production of waste. This is perhaps the most significant development of the Streetbin era and readers will, I hope, keep themselves fully informed,



CASEWORK = ANTIDOTE TO BOLSHEVISM

Casework is part of bourgeois ideology, the purpose of which is to maintain the institution of the family and to police the "deviants" of society and to re-inforce the capitalist's system. The family is the main vehicle for transmitting bourgeois values which present its children to the system as wage slaves for the factories, mines, docks and service in industries like Seebohm factories. Casework is a bastard amalgam of medical, sociological and psycho-analytic theories, which the vast majority who are trained to practice it, either abandon or use to mystify the distance between them and their clients.

Always a means of escape in areas of intense conflict, between social workers and other officials, case-work as a valid means of helping people, is losing credibility among social work students. Casework does not have anything to offer towards resolving the national housing shortage, clearing rent arrears, fighting for entitlements from the DHSS, in advocacy at rent tribunals or courts. Nor has it anything to offer against such attacks on the working class as the Industrial Relations Act, Housing Finance Act, cuts in social services or growing unemployment.

Claimants' Unions are probably the best example of supportive representation through organised collect-ive action in their work with claimants and the DHSS. Unhampered by the ambiguities of casework method, Claimants' interviewing is much more concise, clear and easily understood; the "presenting problem" is dealt with objectively leading to immediate action. The claimant's experience is therefore educational in the individual, group and political sense. Marx, Engels and Reich say more in a single sentence about the family, social relationships and capitalist society than Winnicott, Timms, Wilmott, Young et al. How many social workers have really read Marx? Many social workers are looking for an alternative to case-work and all social workers need an alternative.

The alternative is political action within the class struggle, based on a Marxist analysis. Basically this means beginning to build a massive Trade Union organisation for social workers, and the building of social worker - client alliances.

Invented in the nineteenth century to ward off the spectre of communism, casework has amassed a vast array of techniques, such as "anticipating the ultimate outcome", "explaining the agency", "taking the client off his guard", "putting cards on the table" and even "silence".

Given the confusion, irrelevance, sheer nonsense and attempts to mystify and deliberately divert from real problems facing both social workers and clients, it is impossible to take casework seriously.

Orthodox psychoanalytic theory has been the major influence on casework, and this has been expressed in two broad schools of thought. They both ignore the fact that the mode of production, property relations and class divisions in an oppressive capitalist society distorts personalities and relation-ships, producing anger and hatred which is often misdirected. Clearly the orthodox psychoanalysts and the pedlars of casework with a totally unexplain-able theory called ego-psychology - drawn essentially from psychoanalysis, do not understand the nature of capitalism with its distortion and destruction of Man, through work, consumer exploit-ation, alienation, unemployment, poverty and, sometimes, physical destruction. Or is it that many are deliberately taking a political stand with the ruling class to defend the capitalist system? There is the school which attempts to cure personal neuroses by social adjustment and then there are those who allege they cure social neurosis by changing the individual's personality. Both schools are individualistic and therefore politically reformist. Both confuse the so-called neurotic man with the alienated man whose existence depends upon the accumulation of capital.

Reich and a few other Freudian revisionists have attempted to synthesise the ideas of Marx and Freud and there are isolated examples of progressive, socialist, therapeutic methods. Of these, the Socialist Patients' Collective in Heidelberg was brutally destroyed by armed police and all patients were imprisoned. The method of the group agitation on group and individual levels, scientific study of Reich, Hegel and Marx, but also general involve-ment in political activity. This combination of theory and activity as therapy was evidently a threat to the State. Close examination is necessary to see if these methods can be applied in Britain.

Alienation is basically the social distance between the worker and his product, because of his alienation from the ownership of the means of production, and from the products. It is exacerbated by intense market competition and technical innovation which produces insecurity, depression, humiliation and rivalry. Alienation is a symptom of the social relationships caused by a capitalist mode of produc-tion in a class society. Social workers are daily faced with problems of alienation such as anxiety, depression, marital problems, unemployment, debt, housing need and the many forms of so-called delinquency.

Is there any practical alternative to casework? In the long run a socialist revolution offers the only solution to problems of power, wealth and alienation. Our involvement now must be in work as well as in our private lives. The one to one relationship will never achieve fundamental change. The sheer diversity of casework methods has been divisive and social workers must begin to recognise their alien-ation as workers alongside clients. Consequently they must refuse labels (deviant, delinquent, inadequate) which isolate fellow-workers. We too can be seen as deviant by Seebohm factory bosses. Court reports must only be prepared where essential to the perceived interests of the client. Clients should be invited to attend their case conferences.

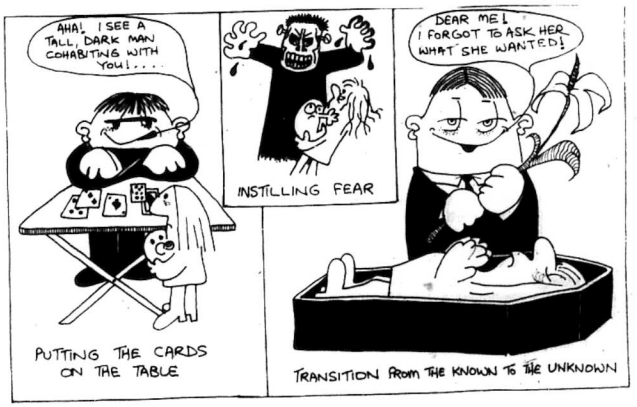
Radicals should beware of being defused through so-called progressive community work. It is essen-tial for social workers to form shop stewards' committees representing every section of their departments, within NALGO and to build a national rank-and-file movement. Such organisation is necessary to defend and improve working conditions and give protection when the growth of revolutionary ideas begins to have effect.

If social workers begin to organise militant action with and on behalf of all those people with whom they work (including patients in mental hospitals and children in residential care) then it is vital that their struggles are defended by strong Trade Union organisation.

Charles Loch, one of the founders of the Charity Organisation Society (now the Family Welfare Association and still with us!) once said: "The anti-dote to Bolshevism is good casework". This attitude was reflected in COS policy for instance when they said they "oppose the provision of any form of State assistance which might undermine individual or family responsibility". These were the principles on which casework was founded and they still pervade the universities, colleges, social services depart-ments, Supplementary Benefit offices and the minds of politicians who decide social policy.

Therefore, let us build a revolutionary socialist antidote to casework and join the struggle to end capitalism.

John Connor



By Whose Authority ?

My recent difficulties with my employer came about because I was doing things they considered bad social work practice. I was not criticised for trade union, Case Con or other political activity, but for the way I did the job. It is true that the way I do social work is more and more reflective of my political beliefs. It is important to me that my politics, my work and for that matter my life be congruent in as many ways as possible. But, can we be committed to a total change of the social order and at the same time earn a living enforcing that order? We must all ask ourselves this question. It is not sufficient to avoid the answer by involving ourselves off the job in revolutionary politics.

The first criticism had to do with my "clearly worked out political position" which sees individuals victimised by an alienating unequal social order. Because of this, said my team leader, I fail to listen properly to people talking about their problems or to give them the individual attention they require in time of stress. I consequently lack sensitivity to the "real" problems experienced by the client. I was described as an "unfeeling person" which is a nice confusion of strength with a lack of feeling. My coldness (strength) was attributed to my political views.

Because I tried to view each client as a competent partner in a joint venture or working alliance with me, my team leader complained that I overlooked the needs and problems of the individual. My theme, "every client a potential helper", whilst obviously not a revolutionary principle, was said to place unrealistic demands on people in need of support and assistance. My expectations were seen by senior staff as naivete about the potential destructiveness of people in general and clients in particular. I frequently commented on the way in which we seriously underestimated the ability, potential and strength of our clients.

I was criticised for lacking the ability to sustain meaningful relationships with clients. My view that neighbours, friends, family members, were likely to be more important than social workers was seen as an attempt to avoid involvement and responsibility for clients. Forming relationships with clients had never been difficult for me, although in retrospect it does seem that these relationships had at least as much to do with my needs as the needs of the client. My somewhat irreverent attitude towards the inability of social workers to offer meaningful alternatives to people oppressed by the system for which we are agents was seen as a denial of my moral obligations and of course, as denigrating social workers' professional skills. My skill at outlining treatment plans far outweighs my ability to put such into action. I may be able to accurately predict what will happen under certain circumstances, but have no way of bringing about those circumstances deemed most desirable. Do we not delude ourselves into thinking that the relationship can be meaningful because we have nothing else to offer?

The document prepared by the team leader for management listed some "facts" about the way I handled (mishandled) three cases. There were rumours about "secret evidence" which never materialised. Generally people in the department accepted the team leader's decision that my appointment should not be confirmed, whether there was any evidence or not, because of her radical democratic reputation. I was the unknown trouble-making probationeer.

My team mates were united in their support of me, immediately and unwaveringly. But, the popularity of the team leader blurred their stand and, in fact, made it possible for their support to be explained away as "adolescent acting out" by a "young, immature, easily influenced team". I would suggest that this explanation (interpretation) exemplifies the condescending, superior attitude management takes toward workers, and workers often take toward clients.

The criticism made of my work are of course based on an ideology which puts worker and client in the same position, that of being individually responsible for failure or incompetence. Both case records (assessment of clients) and performance evaluations (assessment of workers) can suffer from the same perspective, which confuses individual inadequacy with institutional inadequacy. I was assessed as social work has traditionally assessed its clientele, without comment on the institutional context or critical appraisal of the assessor.

The overall ideology of social work is one of individual inadequacies, both for the social worker and the client. To counteract this, there must be a commitment to a collective perspective which helps us rise above the morass of personal pathologies and gratifications. Individual radicals, whether clients or social workers, are eventually trapped by their own individuality, based as it is on ego fulfilment. Had I been without this sort of perspective, I could have been drawn into feeling personally attacked, responsible, inadequate, or - worse perhaps - personally powerful.

Putting this perspective to work, I had questioned publicly: What is the task of the area team? How is what we do related to that task? How and by whom are decisions made about priorities, resources, etc? How do we justify intervention when we are without the tools to provide what is needed? Why should we feel guilty when we fail to accomplish what we are not equipped to do? Are we responsible for each other's work? Why are our opinions and requests ignored by management? How do we get the resources we need? How do we share what we have with our clients? Do we need our clients more than they need us?

Authority is the central theme in all of this, and rightly so. I believe that as social workers our experiences with authority are reflected in our dealings with clients. Each instance of deference without principle to higher authority, or avoidance of conflict for personal gain, corrupts us and will increase the likelihood of our demanding the same from our clients. If we are alienated in our work situation, oppressed by a powerful bureaucracy, can we do other than pass this along? Being controlled, we in turn control others on behalf of our bosses. We have then fallen into the pattern which supports the present social order we say we are committed to change.

I don't think we have any choice as socialists on the job. We expose authority for the oppressive, alienating force it is in our own experience, and then we work toward the authority of respect for the potential power and worth of all individuals. Our experience, even our training as social workers, gives us lots of ammunition. We have only to put it into practice.

Myra Garrett

BASWITTERINGS

In the early days Case Con had illusions of possibly working with BASW and most criticism was levelled at professionalism rather than the professional association itself. Things changed when Nigel Baswit joined our staff and we reprint a few of his snippets.

This first piece is taken from Case Con 11, at a time when it was rumoured that BASW had discovered capitalism:-

" In the past 100 years social work has developed dramatically in response to the needs arising from the interaction of demographic change, industrialisation, mechanisation and technology."
(Social Work Today IV, April 1973).

Now 3 years old, BASW is beginning to take a cautious look at the world around it, but members will have been amazed to find the centre spread of their new-look organ devoted to the discovery of an inalienable element of social work, namely "to protect and promote the interests of the person in his own right."

The signs of denial and other infantile defences (sic) are all too prevalent and the rest of the paper (largely meaningless platitudes about helping the individual as society adjusts itself) bears so little relation to its conclusion that one can only suppose such a subversive sentiment to have been included by accident.

JOIN THE PROFESSIONALS

From Case Con 13 Baswit reminds himself of some of his gems:-

When, in the past, Case Con has cast a glance at at the activities and aspirations of the British Association of Social Workers, the correspondents have, it pains me to say, been less than inspired by our sister organisation. Way back in Autumn 1971 Bob Deacon was worried by the phrase that " the Secretariat (of BASW) must represent, fairly and forcefully, the HIGHEST ACCEPTABLE FACTOR of members' views", and wondered if this merely meant the "lowest common compromise of Brill's machinations." In January this year Baswit looked at the code of conduct, so meticulously thought out, and suggested that the chief appeal " would seem to be as a condition of membership, like the Boy Scouts' oath to God and Queen, with good deeds running a poor third." More recently Baswit criticised that even more noble achievement, the dicovery of The Inalienable Element in Social Work, namely " to protect and promote the interests of the individual as a person in his own right." Baswit then rhetorically, and surely unfairly, asked if the Brillites would now " openly ... challenge all the individual and bureaucratic structures from factories to courts, which conspire both to keep ourselves and our clients in our allotted places?"

Finally in Case Con 14. our intrepid correspondent, disguised as a member of the "on the job" group, turns his extravagant wit to the professionals comic book:-

BASW remains, however, a potent force, even among actual or potential radicals. They read "Social Work Today", rather in the same way that young girls flick through the picture romance books. They know that their lovers will never be as dashing and the kisses never as starry as for those heroines, but the hope remains eternal. All would be possible if only they had the right eye-shadow or vaginal deodorant. Similarly, the social worker studies articles on crisis-intervention, marital interaction etc. and also knows that he/she could never work the techniques so impressively. It is, however, high caseloads or shared telephones that are blamed for this; the idealised concept of casework is as little discarded as the ideal of romance for the school-girl. For the average social worker Case Con with its critique of the whole system, has only served to supplement S. W. T., not to replace it.

KNOW YOUR WRONGS

Social workers imagine they are becoming most sophisticated about Welfare Rights. In fact, very often they suffer from a particular kind of blindness in this matter. Although they may be more conscious of the complexities of the Supplementary Benefit system, they fail to see their own part in the rationing process by which the poor are kept poor. Until this is recognised, social work can be little morethan an unwitting accomplice to the S.S.

For a moment, forget about the S. B. C. and just consider the question of Poor Relief in general terms. Prior to 1948, this was in the hands of two bodies: the Unemployment Assistance Board, which gave means-tested outdoor relief to the unemployed only, and the Public Assistance Committees of Local Authorities which gave indoor and outdoor relief to all other categories of paupers. From 1948 onwards, all forms of outdoor relief for those who were destitute or required supplementation of their contributory benefits passed to the National Assistance Board which replaced the Unemployment Assistance Board, while the institutional part of the Poor Law remained with local authorities.

The new local authority Welfare and Children's Departments had no powers to make payments of outdoor relief, but only to provide institutional care for those who could not fend for themselves.

SOMETHING TO HELP YOU KEEP THE FAMILY TOGETHER

We all know why, for professional reasons, social workers pressed to be given enlarged powers to make financial provisions for their clients, as they were given in the 1963 CYP Act. Social workers felt that the N. A. B. wastoo rigid and too insensitive to the problems of family life to deal adequately with financial cases which threatened the stability of our clients' families. There was aprinciple involved about preventing family break-up; but there was also a principle about the relief of poverty. What social workers failed to realise adequately at the time was that their clients' problems over low wages, bad housing and deteriorating position in the economic system were part of a trend which would continue and increase. These were not

isolated cases, but the first examples of a growing army, a new social class of disadvantaged people. So instead of getting increased flexibility into a viable system, we got the first step in the creation of a new system. Nowadays we get about a quarter of a million children referred to social workers, but only about 50, 000 received into care. A great many of the rest are referred because their parents require poor relief - and a great many of these get poor relief out of 1963 Act funds. Social Services Departments have become relief giving agencies again; every year their power to provide new benefits are increased. It is quite arguable that what Seebohm did was to restore the administrative structure of the old Public Assistance Committees and what Sir Keith Joseph is doing is restoring their poor relief function.

It suits Sir Keith Joseph's philosophy to do this. He puts forward a theory of the "cycle of deprivation" which blames inadequate parents for a great deal of the conspicuous social inequality in our society.

Socialworkers can give money, but with strings: supervision, control and guidance. It also suits the S. B. C. They are retreating along with contributory benefits into an anonymous postal system, which escapes fromthe inconvenience of having to deal with claimants with exceptional or emergency needs. I recently heard Lord Collinson justify the experiment which is going on in the Midlands, under which social workers can pay clients and claim from Social Security, that social workers can uncover needs which S. B. C. officers would find it difficult to trace. This kind of reasoning is why I see as sinister the move to employ intermediate semi-trained social workers. These people will be used to do the job of National Assistance visiting officers, but the clients will have fewer rights (e. g. appeals) and more obligations (e. g. to accept supervision and repayment of loans).

These things are happening under your noses. You are being asked to make emergency payments at weekends to destitute claimants; you are being asked for clothing grants, you are being asked for gas and electricity payments, for telephones, even for supplementary benefit for geriatric patients discharged from mental hospital. All these things are the responsibility of the DHSS, yet you pay them and in paying them you infringe the rights of claimants to benefits. Every time a social worker pays out an emergency payment, he is weakening the Claimants' Union fight for a decent 24 hour emergency service for the poor.

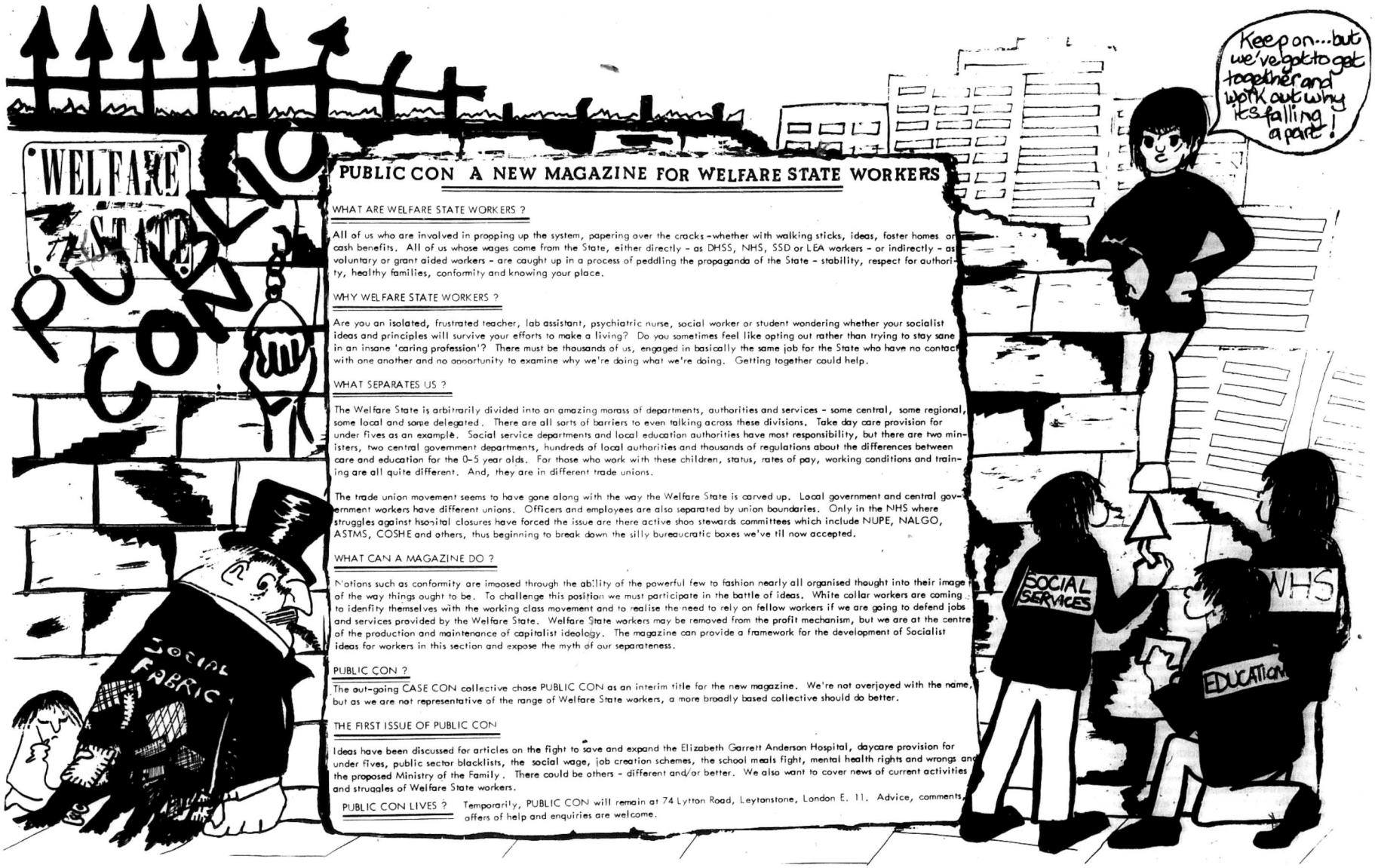
And don't forget, this isn't just for people on S. B. Section 13 allows payments for people in work also.

Social workers are being encouraged to see themselves as " front line troops in the war against poverty". From the point of view of the poor, it often seems more like a war on the poor, and social workers often seem quite clearly among those lined up against them. I am not alone in seeing our system of "relieving" poverty as being a system for regulating the poor. Using social workers to regulate them means giving benefits on the most stigmatised terms, from the most circumscribed budgets, with the most limited rights and in the most degrading manner. It also means that, incidentally, that the professional social workers will become downgraded to the level of relieving officer, and that social work organisations will become as hierarchical and rigidly controlled as civil service departments.

The National Federation of Claimants' Unions is committed to a policy of fighting Social Security centralisation. The way Claimants' Unions see it, centralisation can only be accomplished by the SS through conning Social Services into a more active role in emergency and exceptional needs payments. So Social Services are potentially the enemy. Direct action can soon be expected against local authority departments if social workers continue to collude with this trend. If you're in the front line, expect some rockets.

Bill Jordan

TIMES IS HARD - THEY ATE THE LAST LADY FROM THE WELFARE .....



PUBLIC CON A NEW MAGAZINE FOR WELFARE STATE WORKERS

WHAT ARE WELFARE STATE WORKERS ?

All of us who are involved in propping up the system, papering over the cracks -whether with walking sticks, ideas, foster homes or cash benefits. All of us whose wages come from the State, either directly - as DHSS, NHS, SSD or LEA workers - or indirectly - as voluntary or grant aided workers - are caught up in a process of peddling the propaganda of the State - stability, respect for authority, healthy families, conformity and knowing your place.

WHY WELFARE STATE WORKERS ?

Are you an isolated, frustrated teacher, lab assistant, psychiatric nurse, social worker or student wondering whether your socialist ideas and principles will survive your efforts to make a living? Do you sometimes feel like opting out rather than trying to stay sane in an insane 'caring profession'? There must be thousands of us, engaged in basically the same job for the State who have no contact with one another and no opportunity to examine why we're doing what we're doing. Getting together could help.

WHAT SEPARATES US ?

The Welfare State is arbitrarily divided into an amazing morass of departments, authorities and services - some central, some regional, some local and some delegated. There are all sorts of barriers to even talking across these divisions. Take day care provision for under fives as an example. Social service departments and local education authorities have most responsibility, but there are two ministers, two central government departments, hundreds of local authorities and thousands of regulations about the differences between care and education for the 0-5 year olds. For those who work with these children, status, rates of pay, working conditions and training are all quite different. And, they are in different trade unions.

The trade union movement seems to have gone along with the way the Welfare State is carved up. Local government and central government workers have different unions. Officers and employees are also separated by union boundaries. Only in the NHS where struggles against hospital closures have forced the issue are there active shop stewards committees which include NUPE, NALGO, ASTMS, COSHE and others, thus beginning to break down the silly bureaucratic boxes we've til now accepted.

WHAT CAN A MAGAZINE DO ?

Notions such as conformity are imposed through the ability of the powerful few to fashion nearly all organised thought into their image of the way things ought to be. To challenge this position we must participate in the battle of ideas. White collar workers are coming to identify themselves with the working class movement and to realise the need to rely on fellow workers if we are going to defend jobs and services provided by the Welfare State. Welfare State workers may be removed from the profit mechanism, but we are at the centre of the production and maintenance of capitalist ideology. The magazine can provide a framework for the development of Socialist ideas for workers in this section and expose the myth of our separateness.

PUBLIC CON ?

The out-going CASE CON collective chose PUBLIC CON as an interim title for the new magazine. We're not overjoyed with the name, but as we are not representative of the range of Welfare State workers, a more broadly based collective should do better.

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Ideas have been discussed for articles on the fight to save and expand the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, daycare provision for under fives, public sector blacklists, the social wage, job creation schemes, the school meals fight, mental health rights and wrongs and the proposed Ministry of the Family. There could be others - different and/or better. We also want to cover news of current activities and struggles of Welfare State workers.

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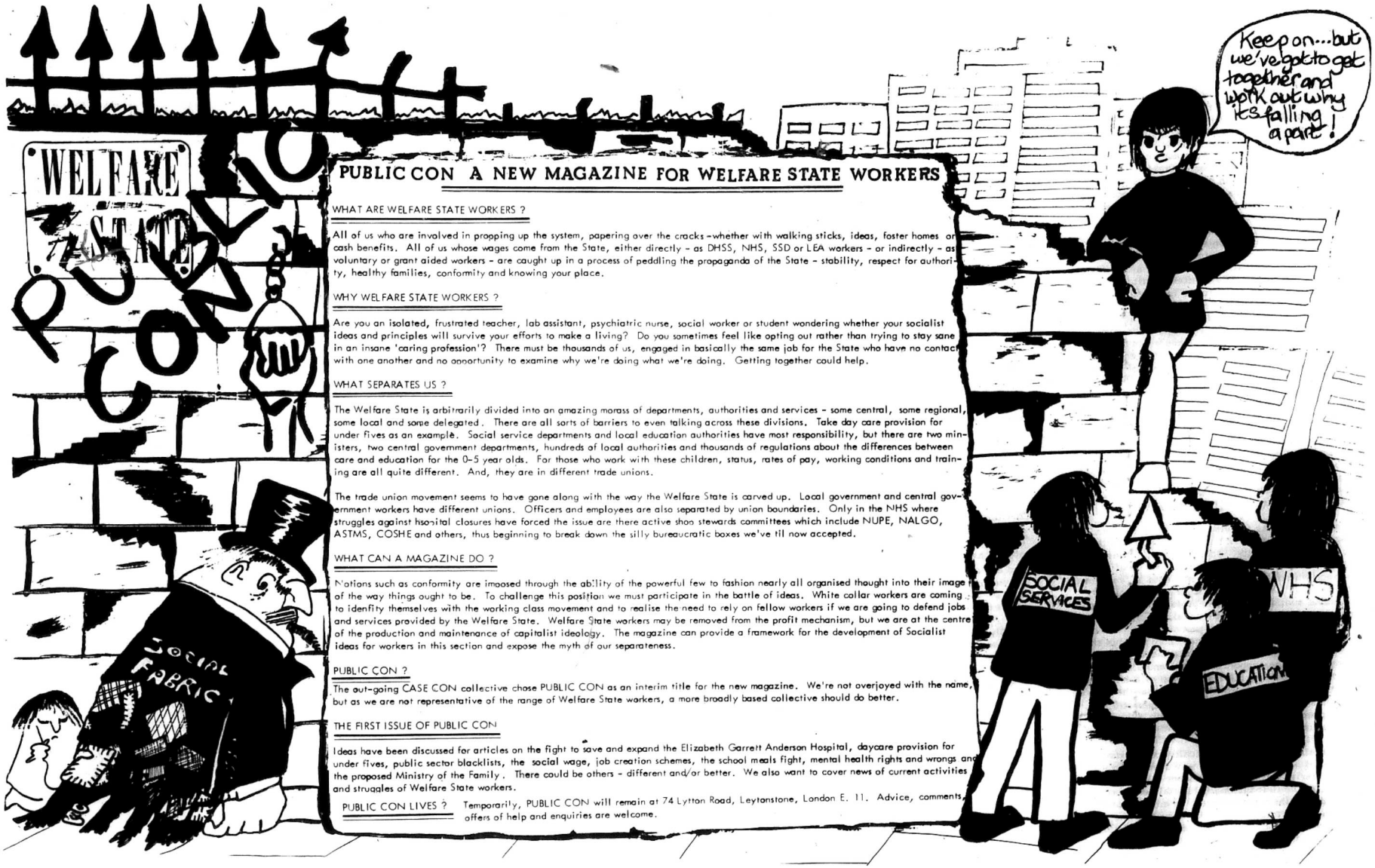

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The Tutorial Game

During the three years I have been on this course, there has been no lack of complaints about tutorial relationships. In fact one student per year over the last three years at least, has been forced to leave for one year, so that he/she may sort out some problem, invariably defined as such by the tutor. The rumour usually spreads very quickly; so-and-so is having a hard time with his/her tutor. The immediate reaction is one of sympathy, support and interpretations in terms of the relationship (i.e. a clash of personalities).

With sufficient provocation some sort of mass meeting is organised and points of view are exchanged diplomatically between staff and students; documents are compiled, and after a sufficient period of time the whole issue is forgotten until the next crisis. The aftermath is generally of an uncomfortable nature; the analysis usually contains a rationalisation, namely "well so-and-so is very self-destructive, you know". Once again the students experience defeat (remember, nothing has changed at all), with increased feelings of despair.

I would suggest that the staff (as a whole) view the situation as stemming from some sort of mass anxiety and see any criticism of the course or its structure, as a mass working out of authority problems. Whichever way they 'diagnose' the problem, they've seen the phenomenon occuring periodically for a number of years, and from experience they know it will pass. Just as the lemmings periodically commit mass suicide, the students as a mass react to a crisis - totally unorganised.

As the staff see the individual tutorial system as an integral part of casework training, they are unlikely to question its validity. Their reaction to these 'crises' usually involves a token involvement at meetings where they allow the students to 'ventilate their feelings' (a well known casework technique), talk about confidentiality and professional development -- and then carry on as usual.

For the student who is having the 'hard time' in the tutorial, the whole issue is understandably very distressing. The support of friends and other students may offer some hope; but that student still has to go to the next tutorial. I would suggest that the student who finds relationships with his/her tutor strained, has stopped playing, or has continually refused to play the tutorial game.

Theoretically a principle of mutuality must exist in the tutorial so that the student may develop awareness of his/herself and also enhance his/her learning ability. In the first instance, tutorials are compulsory and thus the tutor is always in an advantageous position. Both tutor and student know that the student has to be there and that there is no equal relationship. Therefore, any mutuality existing is of a pseudo kind. If you have any doubts about this try cancelling your next tutorial.

The tutorial game is one that is played with increasing frequency during the course. By the end of two years the student has become aware of the rules, or unwittingly plays according to the rules that the tutor has formulated. The student plays, consciously or unconsciously a game - an important part in training the student to think and diagnose in terms of one-to-one relationships, which in many instances (especially in social work) is adequate for a clear understanding of the situation.

Of course, most tutors will maintain that tutorials are for the student's benefit. But nobody benefits from playing games of this sort. The classic tutorial game usually starts with the tutor saying: "You don't seem particularly motivated to do social work". If you make a 'game response', i.e. you start to defend yourself, you have had it. This game can go on for a long time and it's very difficult to stop playing - and impossible to win. The only thing to do in this situation is not to start playing.

Another common game is for the tutor to establish a 'problem area' either academic or personal, or both. If played for long enough the student will become dependant on the tutor to aid its solution. This game sometimes gives the tutorial a semblance of credibility or an aura of satisfaction. If the student refuses to accept the tutor's definition of the problem, the game stops - but another one can start - the 'reluctance to learn' game. If the student refuses to play this one, the tutor usually reverts to the "You don't seem motivated" game.

The first thing you must do is spot the game (there are probably many more in operation, and it might be helpful to compile a list with other students.) One clue is having spent a long time discussing something and having got nowhere. You can then carry on playing if you wish, but I doubt if the whole process will seem so attractive if you know what is happening.

Finally, a word of advice to any student who is told to 'discuss it with your tutor', or who is radical or 'critical' in tutorials: don't bother. Your tutor may well discuss and agree that "it's the system", but talking about it in the tutorial isn't going to change anything. You are, in social work terms, "ventilating". This may be helpful when you are really fed up, but it would be more constructive to share your grievances with fellow students, and together organise an effective body of students, who will be prepared for the "crises". Then mass meetings will cease to be mass ventilations.

JOSEPH GIZZI

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RADICAL SOFT...COPS

destroy capitalism by withdrawing their labour.....??

This article was provoked by some articles drawn to my attention in two libertarian publications ("Anarchy" and "Dialectical Adventures into the Unknown" (sic)). They contain criticism of radical social workers, including Case Con supporters, that we often whispered but rarely stated boldly.

> "Social workers are agents of the State; they don't wear uniforms - they are plain clothes cops and robbers. They supervise our homes and our manner of living. They rob us of our children, fucking us all up in the process. Controlling in the guise of protecting ... She doesn't offer to baby-sit or anything useful, it's just talk and useless sympathy." "Anarchy"

Obviously, I would agree that conventional social work operates as a cooling-out device. The social worker is an agent of social control for he/she prevents the client from grasping the totality of his/her situation in social and economic terms, from experiencing solidarity with other clients. But the authors of the article in "Anarchy" have more to say:

> "... Social workers will sometimes show awareness ... of (the) disparity between their double roles as 'helpers' and as officers of the law. But they always offer a bit of token handwringing, brush it aside because of course there's absolutely nothing they can do about it so long as they remain social workers."

The article in "Dialectical Adventures into the Unknown" (DAITU henceforth) says something similar but in a more critical way:

> "These 'radical' specialists attempt to use their expertise to de-mystify expertise. The contradiction was best spelt out by a Case Con 'revolutionary' social worker, who cynically declared at a public meeting, "The difference between us and a straight social worker is that we know we're oppressing our clients." Case Con is the spirit of the spiritless situation, the sigh of the oppressed oppressor; it's the 'socialist' conscience of the guilt-ridden social worker, ensuring that vaguely conscious social workers remain in their job, whilst feeling that they are rejecting their role. At best this rejection merely
>
> replaces a repressive altruism with a benevolent one - the do-gooder showing their clients how to escape through the loop-holes in the rules of the old world. The confused mish-mash of reformist and revolutionary ideology permeating Case Con is expressed in their aim to phase out the role of the social worker altogether and their demand for more social workers to lighten the workload."

After building up this picture of the 'revolutionary' social workers and tearing apart their theory and practice, the author then finishes off his attack (it's really too one-dimensional to be described as a critique) with some parting shots at the supposed primary objects of a Case Con critique of social work. In comments aimed at all so-called 'radical specialists'; he says:

> "they remain trapped in the fragmented categories they attempt to criticise. Non-sectarianism is the excuse for their incoherence, which has its real basis in their inability to understand the absurd vicious circle of criticising false categories (psychology, philosophy etc., and presumably the theory of social work) using the word 'theory' very loosely

This comes over as pretty devastating stuff, and although there's obviously some truth in what is being said, it is really a Case Con straw man that is being set up and knocked down. But it is a stereotype that is often used - one with built-in inconsistencies and irrationalities. An uncharitable view of the second article is that the author is an armchair, utopian Marxist. I quite agree with the point made in the final quote that the separation of academic "disciplines" serves to obstruct our ability to grasp the totality of living in a capitalist society. But the point in criticising these "false categories" is to attack and destroy them from within - to build the bridges from those aspects of their theory, and theory in practice, that can be incorporated into a socialist world view, and consciously cast aside and replace that which functions as bourgeois ideology.

Exactly the same argument applies to the doing of social work, as referred to in the quote from "Anarchy" and the first quote from "DAITU". Society and social

work won't change by all the revolutionaries, radicals, progressive forces etc. leaving social work to do something more "Marxist/socialist/progressive", because no such thing exists. All work in a capitalist society, whether by hand, brain or good deed, all serves to serve the capitalist system. Obviously some workers are in a better position than others to make demands upon the system and achieve real gains, and likewise have the potential to physically bring the system of production to its knees; others are in a position where they are completely isolated and there is little possibility of collective action. Social workers, as employees of local authorities, are somewhere near the middle of this continuum. The logic then is to stay and fight for change. But how, and change for what?

The perspective of Case Con is to push social workers into the struggle to replace this society based on profit and private ownership with one based on the interests of the vast majority of the population. For social workers this means we must organise ourselves collectively to fight against the atomising "theory" and practice of bastardised, Freudian casework. And I do mean organise collectively, because it takes power to push forward ideas that are not in the interests of capitalist society. Also, it means that we engage in the general struggle of all trade unionists over the control of society's resources. In both cases the area of operation is the trade union and labour movement, however undemocratic they are at the moment, for it is there that the muscle to change things lies.

Finally, I want to thump this notion of phasing out social workers on the head once and for all. Social work, as it exists today, must be abolished, in the sense of being overcome and replaced with new forms, in a socialist society. But there will always be a need for the community provision of helping relationships and experiences for those people in trouble, sorrow and sickness; and people will be needed to work full time at this. What we don't need in a socialist society are the false theories of human behaviour that constitute social work practice in capitalist society.

pete feldon

HOME FOR DEVIANTS OR DEVIANCE FROM HOME

In residential establishments, the area of greatest conflict, for both workers and kids, is that of day to day living and the consequent clash of lifestyles. It is here that we really face the problem of whether we live in a home for deviants or in some kind of deviance from home. If people could be really honest, it would be very interesting to assess the answer to the question "Whose place is this?", asked in a random selection of children's homes. The chances are that while the workers might well answer "It's our place", including the entire group of workers and kids, the kids would, in a clearer and more honest analysis, answer "It's their place", and so it is.

The cultural expectations and the material standard of living are both high, both middle class, and most kids who come to stay in local authority homes are working class. Middle class people tend to have their own protection against statutory care. The average kids' home will, therefore, reflect both the repressive emotional structure and the inflated material expectations to be found in the middle class family. To what extend it was just these patterns which caused the child to come into care in the first place, and to what extent therefore it is wise or safe to reproduce them is a question that has not been worked through by residential workers or by those above them in the bureaucracy.

Without doubt there are communal alternatives to the nuclear family, but these are by no means positive merely because people are collected together. Group living does not become communal simply by increasing the number in the group any more than it becomes positive by reproducing patterns more appropriate to other forms of living. We would not see prisons, mental hospitals or convents as offering positive new thoughts in communal living.

Statutory care ends at 18, and many kids whose main living experience has been on a relatively communal basis are precipitated into a society whose main emphasis is on the small nuclear family. Obviously kids want to leave care and start their own lives, but the attainment of freedom is often double-edged. The prize for conformity for a kid reaching 18 and being 'ready to leave' is to be thrown back into that society from which that same kid was originally rejected. Residential childcare could become a really positive force if it could learn to see itself not as a shoddy option to family life, but as a valid learning experience in communal living.

If the residential situation is to be seen as able to offer a positive alternative to family life, it must lose its stigma, its public image as a home for deviants. The whole concept of staffing would have to be radically rethought, so that it could involve local people, parents and full-time workers. It might then be possible for kids' homes to offer communally based facilities for play space, 24-hour a day care, community restaurant and even a launderette. They could be used either in conjunction with, or instead of, the nuclear family. Such community homes (in the ideal sense) could offer an alternative and help loosen the stranglehold exerted by the family at its worst. Many kids would then have the chance to alternate between periods of living with parents or other relatives and periods in the community home. Neither would then have its present threatening aspect. If we were secure in knowing that there was an alternative we could use communal living as a respite from family and vice versa.

abigail goodden

Sexist ideology of casework

ELIZABETH WILSON

Across the past four years, amongst all the sometimes virulent criticisms that have been made of casework, I don't remember once having heard any attack on its anti-feminism. This is of course partly because many of those who attacked it were men, who, whatever their political view, had no critique of women's position in society and were probably quite happy for their own wives to stay at home with the kids while they themselves did their radical thing out in the world. But it is not just the fault of men. Women social workers too have lacked a feminist consciousness until recently. I'm not sure why that is, though I think it must have to do with the highly ideological role of social workers, which is very much bound up with traditional norms about the role of women - mothering, housecare and feminine appearance.

But what is sexism? The word sexism derives from an analogy with the word racism. Sexism is an ideology which attributes an unchanging set of characteristics to a group of people (women) on the basis of their gender; and this ideology serves to enforce and justify the inferior position in society of the whole group and therefore supports and benefits the group in power, in this case, men.

How does sexism manifest itself in casework? (In the following discussion I am referring largely to casework literature. I am not taking up a stance of blanket condemnation of all casework, i.e. all interviewing by social workers of clients on a one to one basis). There seems to me to be three interlinked areas where a sexist ideology is dominant - sexuality, motherhood and the family. All three rest on the theoretical foundations of casework.

I am not among those who reject Freud out of hand. On the contrary I believe he has done some of the groundwork necessary for the creation of a science of human personality. But there can be no doubt that his attitude to women is paternalistic, authoritarian and contemptuous. Eric Frommhas put it well: "For Freud only the male is really a full human being. Woman is a crippled, castrated man. She suffers from this fate, and can be happy only if she finally overcomes her 'castration complex' by the acceptance of a child and a husband. But she remains inferior also in other respects - for instance she is more narcissistic, and less directed by conscience than man. This strange theory, according to which one half of the human race is only a crippled edition of the other, followed Victorian ideas that woman's desires were almost entirely directed to the bearing and upbringing of children - and to serve the man. Freud gave clear expression to this when he wrote 'the libido is masculine'. Belief in this Victorian idea of woman as being without her own sexuality was an expression of the extreme patriarchal assumption of man's natural superiority to the woman . . ."

This Freudian distortion has been most useful in bolstering up reactionary aspects of casework in its ideological and adjustive role. It has been in practice the caseworker's role to ensure the smooth functioning of the family, which has meant the better adjustment of the mother to her role. Child Guidance Clinics can, for instance, be very repressive towards mothers. The "disturbed" or "naughty" child is presented for treatment but often, or even usually, the psychiatrist sees his task as being to free the child from the "neurotic", i.e. over-possessive or insufficiently loving mother. "All we are trying to do is help them to be better mothers" a PSW said to me once. But the reasons why women are over-possesive, unloving or neurotic are ignored or flatly denied, and they are expected instead to learn to love their bondage and be more self-sacrificing and less over-identified with their children; more abnegation, more resignation.

Social Service Department's dealings with families and children are always in the interests of keeping the family together, restoring children to their parents, and so on. This becomes sexist in that it usually leads to a reinforcement of traditional roles within the family - mothers are to be more loving and nurturant and not go out to work, fathers more masculine, i.e. more authoritarian. Many books on casework stress these traditional roles. Closely linked to the family on one hand and to female sexuality on the other, is motherhood. The client as mother is the central focus of the work of probably the majority of social workers, and many social workers must have set themselves the goal of making a client a "better mother".

In our society, women's sexuality is not as yet divorced from reproduction. Hence woman's role in the family, and the elaborate mythology surrounding it. This means that what attention has been given to female sexuality by social workers - and not much has - has been directed towards women's achievement of orgasm within the monogamous marriage. Again successful treatment is seen as greater conformity to traditional masculine and feminine roles. Here for instance is a client at the Tavistock Institute of Marital Studies: "The progress Mrs. M. had made was obvious. She had gone a long way towards feminity; she showed a new interest in the home, in sewing and cooking. While she seemed pleased about her achievements, she made angry remarks to the worker, suggesting that she wanted to make her into a 'humdrum housewife', with washing on Mondays and a dull, competent routine.

It is an important part of sexist mythology that women cannot really like each other, but always have to be rivals and enemies and fight over men. This belief is reflected in client/social worker relations. Most social workers in the field are still women. The casework relationship as it commonly works out, simply serves to divide the two groups. Far from showing solidarity with clients, workers often pity and patronise them for their ill success in managing their man, money and children. Social workers often see themselves as representing a model of successful feminity for clients to "learn" from. Yet the only group that can fight sexism in social work are these same women social workers. They could form some basis of an alliance with their women clients if they could only recognise their own oppressed situation. This would involve struggling against the way they themselves are treated.

WOMEN'S WORK myra garrett

My view of the job of social work has been deeply affected by the analysis of women's role in capitalism as the private reproducer of labour power. Is this not the same role played by social worker? "Welfare measures and education are obviously essential gains of working class agitation, social work and teaching are useful jobs amidst the devastation capitalism creates. But in our society they serve a dual function, of straightforward help and of social and political containment. Ironically women are ideally suited by their conditioning to help and contain. Teaching and social work alike utilise the endless capacity of women to give themselves dutifully and passionately in a way which bears no relationship to cash reward". (Sheila Rowbotham. Hidden From History).

Is this not the epitome of woman's place - herself always in response to others - an unending, unspecific task of helping, nurturing, caring, educating, supporting? Jobs traditionally defined as women's work represent an extension of traditional duties within the home. An American career guide says that social work "utilises the natural feminine instinct for helping others". A Social Work Today editorial points out that the preponderance of women in social work "presumably has something to do with the work. Biologically speaking, women are cast in a caring and protective role. They are perceived and perceive themselves as caring agents in respect of their own dependent offspring and others who are dependent". (my emphasis) Another American explains that for the unmarried woman a social work career offers a functional alternative to marriage and the family, and another route to self-fulfilment. For the married woman, social work offers a career role free of conflict "as the service orientation allows for a greater degree of substitutability between wife and mother role and worker role". Why hadn't I seen it before?

Social work an an occupation has little prestige. Its poor reputation "represents a derogation of social work activity as being soft-minded and impractical, and therefore 'feminine' in quality". (another American writer) The means for improving the prestige of social work in vogue at the moment are professionalism and recruiting more men. We are told that the swing away from casework towards social and political action might be attributable to increasing male influence in social work. (!) The result of increasing emphasis on professionalisation is a competitive disadvantage to women, who are not encouraged to develop characteristics which are rewarded. In a male dominated society, men attribute those qualities they esteem least to women, and while they remain dominant in their traditional occupations, they invade "women's work" at managerial levels.

We are urged by our professional organisation to take a traditional stand in the face of this discrimination. "Let's try to make sure that in a world where it still falls to women to do much of the caring, the best possible means to that end are provided by the men at the top". We should accept our place with grace. Non-acceptance may mean a fight at substantial personal cost. So for the most part, we do accept. "Freudian theory with its emphasis on the particularity of sex roles may have further inhibited female social workers from openly aspiring to administrative positions". It isn't Feminine to want equality.

Returning to the idea that we as social workers are doing something useful for the state, we gain even more understanding of our role. As early as 1917, Mary Richmond described the friendly visitor (inevitably a woman) as a "patient, perservering, faithful friend who through personal influence would teach those less fortunate than herself habits of self control". The Charity Organisation Society (now known as the Family Welfare Association) made it even clearer in 1927: "The only real antidote to Bolshevism is good casework".

Encouraged by the State's "liberalised" view of unfortunates, including women, the reformers continued to demand more services and ended up with State interference in virtually every area of family and community life. The State relies on the properly socialised products of the families it supports to reinforce the traditional values and roles upon which the system rests. Obviously, the role of women is central and the pressure is enormous for women to conform to traditional expectations both at home and at work. It makes sense that the State should employ women to do this work on its behalf. Not so isolated or invisible as in the home, but women's work nevertheless.

But why should we complain? Why struggle to develop a woman's consciousness? Because we are otherwise mystified by the liberalism and individualism of the work itself and by uncritical acceptance of our sex role conditioning. If we are mystified, we can but pass this on to our "clients", who are mostly without the job "equality" we have. This mystification also leads us to accept ideas that women can only be organised at work, and that only through selling their labour can they become part of the struggle. Often the work itself, especially when it is women's work is a deterrent to organising and awareness. No basic change in consciousness takes place when women move out of the home into work which merely perpetuates things as they are. Social work is that kind of work. It is time we opened our eyes and had a good look around.

THE REPRODUCTION OF LABOUR POWER

ANGELA WEIR

Social work is women's work in a double sense. Most social workers are women and most of their clients are women. This situation arises, I believe, out of the structural similarities between the nature of social work and the role of women as wives and mothers. Both social work and women's domestic labour within the family is concerned with ensuring the efficient reproduction of labour power. As they are both engaged in similar types of labour, women as social workers and women as wives and mothers share some similar attitudes to their labour and experience some similar contradictions.

Obviously any society has to have some mechanism for ensuring its own reproduction if it wishes to continue for any length of time. This means that capitalism, like any other society, has to reproduce its own relations of production. That is to say, it has to reproduce the class system. In particular there has to be some method which will ensure that the working class - in capitalism, the working man - gets up every day, is suitably fed and clothed, with the requisite skills and attitudes, to sell his labour power in the market and which will ensure that there are children to carry on the great tradition. In advanced capitalism there are a number of structures which carry out this function, but one of the most significant is the family and women's domestic labour within it.

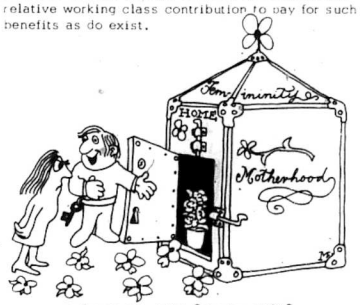
One characteristic feature of capitalism is the inbuilt tendency to increase productivity per head and as capitalism developed, the necessity for women and children to work decreased. Marriage became instead the husband's sanctuary and retreat from the world of labour. In this "sanctuary" the wife's task was to service the husband. Women began to labour in the home to reproduce male labour power for the market. Only labour in the production of commodities for exchange was socially valued and paid a wage. Therefore women's labour in the home was systematically under-valued or not seen as labour at all. Instead women's domestic labour was submerged in her "womanhood" and underwritten by a number of ideologies ranging from crude biological determinism to the most sophisticated types of family casework.

In fact the actual work involved in reproducing labour power is complex and varied. As it has been elaborated at greater length elsewhere suffice it to say here that it includes reproducing the means of subsistence, shopping, cooking, cleaning, ironing, the reproduction, care and socialisation of children and the reproduction in interpersonal relationships - "tension management in all its bewildering psycho-sexual forms".

One of the effects of these reforms (the legislation creating the Welfare State) even though they were paid for largely through working class taxation and insurance contributions, was to provide the material basis for working class family life. It meant that the working class adopted patterns of familial relations which had hitherto been exclusive to the upper middle classes. In short they created a more efficient structure for the reproduction of labour power based on the family unit and women's labour as wives and mothers. Lord Beveridge remarked succinctly (1945) "Taken as a whole the plan for social security put a premium on marriage in the place of penalising it. In the next thirty years housewives as mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuation of the British race and British ideals in the world".

Social work in this period, in supporting the current definition of sex roles, strove to lock women more tightly in domestic labour and thus played its part in ensuring the efficient reproduction of a striving and de-radicalised working class. It is interesting to note that in this period the changing pattern of working class life was often used by sociologists to argue that the bourgeois-ification of the working class and the end of all class ideology.

The working class family has been less "successful" in socialising its children suitably and in creating a fit and adaptable work force, than might have been predicted. Working class standards of living are dropping or only keeping apace of rising costs. One of the reasons for this is the deterioration and even the withdrawal of certain welfare services and the attempt to exact an even greater relative working class contribution to pay for such benefits as do exist.



I BUILT IT JUST FOR YOU, DEAR

TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR DELUSION OF BEING TRAPPED IN A CAGE...

In effect, the generic method (from Seehohm) applied to the family will involve social workers using women to provide more and more of the services which should properly be undertaken by the welfare state, like caring for the sick and the old and forcing families to stay together whatever the cost to the individual women, in order to keep down the demand for housing. No doubt in order to achieve this, social workers will exert a good deal of ideological pressure on women and support her endlessly in the drudgery of her domestic labour.

I have argued that social work is one facet of capitalism's attempt to secure the efficient reproduction of labour. The primary mechanism for this was the exclusion of women from the work force. This in itself was not enough though to secure the domestication of working class life. It was only possible for the working class nuclear family to emerge when the State actively intervened in the organisation of the reproduction of labour power. The creation of the social work profession was part of this process, but the nature and methods of social work were always affected by the developing nature of both the working class family and the Welfare State. I would like to suggest that the present crisis in the family and in the Welfare State reveal the role of women as reproducers of labour power quite clearly and that in this situation there are a number of strategies which radical women social workers can adopt.

NOW TELL ME ABOUT **YOUR** DELUSION THAT I'M **NOT** TRAPPED IN A CAGE.

L.A. COMMUNITY WORKERS

The Welfare State is seen in the Case Con manifesto as a means of winning over even the militant working class to acceptance of the capitalist system. Within this perspective, community work can be seen as a new technique to cover the more evident sores of the capitalist urban social structure. Although community workers, by exposing local need and articulating protest could make trouble, their employers, local authorities, can divert any potential threat by defining non-contraversial areas of work, effectively isolating them within large social services departments, or even simply relying on the community workers' naivete in attempting to manipulate local politicians in a paternalistic way and so failing to genuinely engage the critical energy of local people.

The liberal ideology of community work has evolved through notions of communication and participation which deny the very class conflict which engenders the need for community work. Can community workers remain content to operate in cosmetic public relations, serving local government policy or will they engage in conflicting loyalties and opt for serving the local community of need, rather than the employing authority?

With the rediscovery in the 1960s of structural poverty and the limitations of a pathological approach, the Home Office set up Urban Aid and CDPs, following American examples. Central funds were diverted to defined areas of high social need and local authorities followed suit. Although, partly through generic localised Seebohm social services departments, new emphasis was placed on self-help within the community and consumer participation, this was only realised by increased levis from taxes and rates, with more conscious dependence on welfare finance.

Participatory Democracy, Lack of Resources and the State

"The people" may now be more energetically consulted at a time when cut-backs are becoming more extensive. The experience of a local authority community worker in Haringey suggests that community work (e.g. among tenants' associations) is focussed on 'participation' and 'communication' without recognising objective constraints which render such notions mere rhetoric. Protest may be assimilated within the bureaucracy and conflict muffled. Any short-term benefits accruing from community workers' efforts hardly offset lost opportunities to organise and fight for a genuine redistribution of resources. On the whole, Haringey experience suggests that community worker intervention tends to enhance the standing of already powerful, middle class dominated groups at the expense of the less articulate, more demoralised people.

Too much time is spent working on issues that will placate the agency." The Southwark workers also observe "we feel that community action to date has seldom demonstrated that it can make any significant impact on the fundamentals of resource allocation and power holding." (1)

Community Work within the L.A. Administration - Relationship with Local Politics

Although their more structural perspective might be educative in raising the consciousness of social workers, many Local Authority community workers prefer to avoid becoming engulfed within local social service area teams. They have been offered non-controversial roles, and some have been seduced into impotent seclusion by their choice of diplomatic status, divorced from their community.

Activism - Loyalty to Whom?

A common theme (1) is the danger of the community worker getting hopelessly enmeshed in the blind alley of attempts at manipulating the local power structure and the limited resource returns this approach seems to yield. The dilemma of the community worker is that effective community work would often, necessarily, help to expose the deficiencies of resource provision, and thus a clear-cut clash of loyalties may always be very close in the day to day practice of community work. The Southwark community workers recognise that "in reality, it is the closely linked group of senior officers, with the councillors of the inner party caucus (monolithically Labour in London's East End), working intimately together, who put down the major policy guide-lines ... It is clear that decisions are made by an inner circle, without reference to other members of the Council, the staff or the public," they recognise "how impotent the (community) worker generally is" in this situation (1). Thus there is a limit to existing opportunities for participation of the people, and this often leads to unconvincing token participation or straight manipulation. "Information is usually given where it will facilitate the smooth functioning of the council's machinery, not where it could promote change ...

Conclusion

The conclusion of the Sefton community workers (2) is starkly clear: "That community work is seeking to stimulate people to (examine) common problems, results in the community starting to identify needs and demand resources ... (which) are not at present available to meet the need." This throws light on central and local government resource policies and becomes potentially threatening and explosive for the employing authority. In Sefton the Council leadership and senior officials were clearly influenced by the narrow interests of the ruling political party into an extremely suspicious attitude towards a neighbourhood council which was a focus of the work of one of the two community workers. They appeared to see community work as a means of social appeasement and control, and clamped down when this limitation was exceeded. The authors felt that "council policy would seem to be inadequate, or working against significant sections of the population, viz the working class" (3). In a nearby local authority community workers have been told to keep a 'low profile' until next year's elections, because the political party in control of the authority fears the possibility of defeat and believes active community work, by exposing the issues, could assist this.

The dilemma then is clear "community workers must either recognise the constraints and adjust their aims and methods to them, or challenge these insidious limitations on their work"(3). Senior L.A. officers indicated that "good community work is keeping bad publicity about the local authority out of the press" and made it clear to the community worker that he should be working for his employers' interests rather than those of the local people (3).

The picture then is one of community workers being employed to manipulate and control community pressure groups' conscious attitude towards the allocation of resources, to cool out protest, anger and conflict under the guise of 'communication' and 'participation'. When the gut issue of lack of resources raises its ugly head the community worker has either to keep a 'low profile' or placate the angry population by the use of his/her professional skills. In Sefton the community workers were ousted precisely because of their apparent effectiveness in helping to articulate community needs. Not surprisingly perhaps, the committed community workers of Sefton plan to stay in Sefton to develop their work despite their departure from local authority employment. This seems the most fitting conclusion to this article.

Richard Herne

(1) Article on Constraints on Community Workers in L.A. SSDs - D. Burkens, A. Dufton, D. Rogers (unpublished).
(2) Community Work and Social Services - Seebohm Calls. D. Coleman & A. Wiggins (unpublished paper). Section on the Welfare State.
(3) The Sefton Experience (unpublished paper).

TRAINING for CLIENTS in ANTI-SOCIAL WORK

Report on Training for Clients

During the past years the growth in the number of social workers has been causing increased concern amongst clients and thus the publication today of a report on Client Training is especially timely.

The report makes detailed recommendations concerning not only training provision but also course content and professional development.

What are the facts? We know for instance that social workers are increasing in all western industrial societies. Some writers have suggested that the wide differences between the numbers in different countries, or for that matter between certain neighbourhoods, is a very good indicator of the comparative disintegration of that society or neighbourhood. Certainly it now seems that alienation and role problems are positively correlated with the number of social workers in an area. The report states that society does seem to throw up the social workers it deserves, but it may be that in industrial societies we are more able at calculating the numbers of social workers in the population and not that there are intrinsic differences in their prevalence.

Clients Should Work Themselves Out of a Job

We shall need an intensive programme of client training if we are to go any way to meet the needs of these growing numbers of social workers. For many years now it has been hoped that eventually clients would work themselves out of a job, but to date we have no evidence to support this. The conflicting philosophies which client work embodies are ever more prevalent in policy statements. Should clients see themselves as providing a service which will at some date become unnecessary? Or will it become accepted as part of a higher standard of living that client-provided services will be universally available for those that need them at certain times of their lives?

Exclusiveness Perpetuated

A series of client courses are recommended by the report, situated in universities, polytechnics and colleges of further education and the report deals scathingly with those critics who have suggested that this might produce 1st and 2nd class clients; "clients are too practical and altruistic to adopt a traditional view of educational institutions". These courses for 1 and 2 years will be developed and run by clients who have had some experience of social workers but it warns that too much experience may well not be a good thing as it may promote clarity. The client educationalists should be selected by clients to ensure that the language and traditional culture of the profession is maintained and that exclusiveness is perpetuated in the best interests of the social workers.

Training will consist of integrated field work and academic studies with the field work supervised by specially selected, experienced clients. These fieldwork supervisors will be peripherally involved in the training programme by invitation to meetings. The client teachers will be expected to undertake simple research into the solutions of social workers and to publish their findings. Thoughts and comments on social workers will be encouraged, although comments on other clients will be strenuously curtailed unless they prove what a good job clients do and that this is only surpassed by what trained clients do.

Good Clients Born Not Made

Training will be directed to ensuring that clients feel expert in the creation and sustenance of the casework relationship. The courses will be especially geared towards developing client insight and ensuring that clients can exclude their own needs from this relationship. It will be recognised that some potential clients are motivated by the desire to satisfy their own needs and this should be watched for in prospective trainee clients. This is best done by a searching intake record of the sort most clients are familiar with, followed by a typical intake interview in which diagnosis of previous clients' solutions are brought out into the open for derogatory comment by the interviewer. It is thought, of course, by many that good clients are born and not made and that training only enhances basic maturity, adjustment and stability, which should be defined by the individual interviewer as he or she thinks fit that morning. The report suggests that as the numbers of social workers grow, or for that matter if they are static, some very experienced and trained clients should have extra training in management and client supervision. This should also go some way to meet the needs of those clients who find contact with social workers so difficult and painful that they prefer to direct and manage clients as their contribution. However, with the increased training programmes the needs of such clients can perhaps best be met as academic clients which usually precludes such contact completely. This would imply 'training for the trainers'. Research on training will be necessary, e.g. the evaluation of training courses for client teachers and the evaluation of such evaluation.

Although courses aim to produce generic clients who will be able to meet the needs of a wide variety of social workers, it must be recognised that some clients will be more skilled at working with certain types of social workers than others and that if clients are to reach the most difficult, withdrawn, dangerous or manipulative social workers, special techniques and training will need to be developed. Some social workers, for instance, play off one client against an other and clients must learn to share information and experience to prevent this, e.g. case conferences. Here the shared discussion will prevent the immature client from colluding with the inappropriate demands of long term social workers and will ensure that professional standards are maintained. Social workers often come to clients with a presenting solution and the well trained client will be able to help them to admit the true solution which the social worker will in fact often know, deep down. However, some social workers are unable to make use of clients' help whatever is made available - these are the unreachable. Some social workers are extremely over-demanding of the clients' time and even money, expecting to drop in when it suits them, without appointments and expecting regular money payments. The report recognises that although some social workers are chronic, many are just inadequate at diagnosis and solutions.

Preventing Social Workers? or Curing Them?

A great deal of space is given in the report to a discussion of training for preventive work. This is inevitably intertwined with its paradoxical thread - non-take-up of services. The report recommends experimental units financed by central government sited in suburbia with the intention of ensuring full take-up of rights. Most suburban families have solutions to offer at some time in their life cycle and these units will need to find new ways of reaching them and finding the hidden social workers: the report claims that such preventive services will in time reduce the demands on clients and so local authorities are thought to be very willing to cooperate in these exciting ventures. In these areas social work is often a recurring cycle, with some families producing generation after generation of social workers. Clients will need to experiment further if this cycle is to be broken into and further social workers prevented, even, in the case of chronic social work families, to the extent of taking one or more of the children at risk into care. Multi-client groups are suggested to look at social workers who are throwing up solutions in particular areas. Other preventive measures are suggested: for example, the intriguing proposition that clients should encourage the formation of supportive social work groups for the severely P.S.W.d. Some social workers, when properly prepared, might be able to offer suitable comments on the development of client training and might form participation panels, although they should only be consulted about such items as paint colours and fabric designs for their offices as they are noticeably biased and some are even unbalanced as a result of being long-term social workers.

Register of 'At Risk' Social Workers

A central register of social workers is suggested so that further deterioration of 'at risk' social workers can be prevented, although the report soberly recognises that some social workers are unreachable, a few positively dangerous, and that many are unrealistic. Clients, the report declares, must recognise and be able to accept that to some extent they are agents of social control and should ensure that social workers maintain certain standards for the good of society. The dangerous social workers will still need to be confined by clients and some clients will need special training to enable them to work with social workers in a residential setting. These clients need to concentrate on adapting the behaviour of social workers so that they can function in their own life situations.

A Staff College

Professional development is considered crucial to the future of clients. A strong exclusive professional body is suggested with membership restricted to tested clients, experienced clients being admitted at a lower fee than the trained. This organisation should concentrate on those issues of importance to clients: wages, job development, suitability for jobs, training. Efforts should be made to ensure that clients' important characteristics are preserved, such as their political apathy. Social workers should of course not be included in the organisation although again strong branches may select appropriate social workers, who have learnt client language and norms, to speak to them. Professional development will be encouraged and training standards maintained by a central government committee for training of clients, The National Institute for Client Training. The latter will spend much of its efforts in presenting the client' image to the powerful, and a suitably eminent client is proposed as Chairman. It has been rumoured that Ronald Biggs has been approached for this post as he is known to have financial skills which are considered vital.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of prime importance to the clients. This means that clients should give full and detailed information about individual social workers to other clients but should refuse information to the individual social worker and to other social workers: also, to people purporting to be clients who aren't really (individual clients should determine this). Computerisation of information about social workers should eventually facilitate the development of speedier communication of client prejudice and stereotyping of social workers.

The report reassures us that, if clients are well paid, have an adequate career structure and reasonable grants during training, there are untapped resources but it does admit that being a client is still a vocational undertaking which is difficult, arduous and calls for courage and strength of character. We must not, however, the report concludes, pay clients too much as we might then get people joining the profession for the wrong reasons.

The Pathology of Social Work

The report concludes that although social workers tend to live in particular areas, are often known to the police, are on free petrol, come from a particular class, are unimaginative, inarticulate, confused about their values and objectives, have difficulty in making relationships, are insecure, suffer from a history of trauma, crisis and often have self images which are not reality-based, yet with the right sort of help from clients, who concentrate on ego-building and individual worth, great changes in behaviour patterns will be possible. It points out that we do not yet know enough about social work life styles or social work sub-cultures or for that matter more straight-forward information such as what causes the distinctive smell in some chronic social work homes. Extensive research programmes are recommended into the etiology of social work and its social pathology; typologies of social workers; and the needs of multi-problem social workers and their conformist sub-culture.

ELIZABETH FILKIN
(with a little help from her friends)

THE MANIFESTO

No Easy Answers

Every day of the week, every week of the year, social workers (including probation officers, educational social workers, hospital social workers, community workers and local authority social workers) see the utter failure of social work to meet the real needs of the people it purports to help. Faced with this failure, some social workers despair and leave to do other jobs, some hide behind the facade of professionalism and scramble up the social ladder regardless; and some grit their teeth and just get on with the job, remaining helplessly aware of the dismal reality. Of course, some do not see anything wrong in the first place.

Case Con is an organisation of social workers (in the broadest sense), attempting to give an answer to the contradictions that we face. Case Con offers no magic solutions, no way in which you can go to work tomorrow and practise some miraculous new form of social work which does meet the needs of your "clients". It would be nice if there were such an answer, but we believe that the problems and frustrations we face daily are inextricably linked to the society we live in, and that we can only understand what needs to be done if we understand how the welfare state, of which social services are a part, has developed, and what pressures it is subject to. It is the purpose of this manifesto to trace briefly this development, to see how it affects us and our relationships to the rest of society, and above all to start working out what we can do about it.

The "Welfare State"

The welfare state was set up partly in response to working-class agitation and mainly to stabilize the upheavals generated by wartime conditions. It was recognised that improvements in the living conditions of workers helped provide capitalism with a more efficient work force and could nip militancy in the bud. Furthermore, the threat of withdrawal of benefits under certain conditions (being on strike or cohabiting, for example) could be a useful technique of social control. During the post-war boom, wage rises came fairly easily; in the euphoria about the supposed end of inequality, means tests were gradually reintroduced and the principle of universal entitlement to social, educational and health services was eroded. As the boom subsided, cuts in welfare expenditure were justified in the attempt to control inflation and are now used ideologically to create an impression of scarcity as an explanation for the crisis of capitalism. Cuts have taken three main forms:

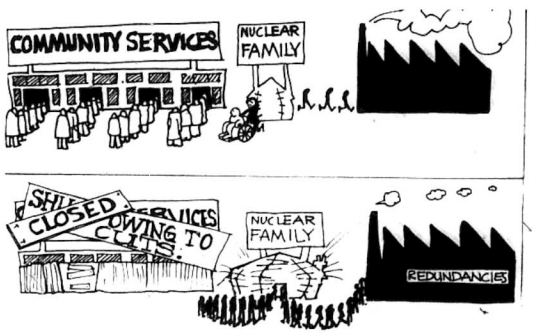
1 Actual and direct cuts in expenditure - prescription charges, withdrawal of free school milk, cut-backs in building programmes, etc.

2 The drawing of resources from the working class itself via operations like the Housing Finance Act, and the widespread introduction of means-testing.

3 The rationalization of all services on a long-term basis - for example, The National Health Service, and even the "hiving off" of certain sections to private enterprise, for example, pensions.

In the social services, the Seebohm Report was the main agent of this rationalization process. Specialised social work (mental health, child care, etc.) was abolished and replaced by generic social work, placing the emphasis of responsibility for welfare on the family not on the state. The new generic workers were supposed to be "helping individuals and families cope with their problems and so achieve at any given time a better personal service and social equilibrium, a better chance to face challenges and accept responsibility". In other words, to persuade the "client" that his problems are of his own making, and to learn to face up to them.

It was decided to utilize the resources of the community itself to tackle social problems at both an individual and a community level. Thus, a new category of worker was proposed to discover and promote these resources within the community and to emphasize the importance of people doing things for themselves rather than depending on the corporation or on the government. This can be seen also in recent changes in legislation dealing with criminal offenders, for example, community service orders and intermediate treatment schemes. The



encouragement of voluntary organisations was another important facet of the new strategy, and official dependence on such organisations as Child Poverty Action Group and Shelter is increasing. Even claimants' unions and squatters have been successfully co-opted by the state.

Professionalism

It is important to examine the "professional approach" that has been accentuated by Seebohm and happily accepted by social service hierarchies and workers alike. "Professionalism" firstly implies the acquisition of a specialism - knowledge and skills not possessed by untrained workers. This isolates the social worker from the population at large. Secondly, social workers come to see themselves as part of an accepted specialist group on a par with doctors and lawyers. Thirdly, it encourages the introduction of businesslike career structures, where "correct" and "professional" behaviour (such as "detachment" and "controlled emotional involvement") is rewarded with advancement. Clearly, such an approach is welcomed by the ruling class.

One important tool of professional social work has been casework - a pseudo-science - that blames individual inadequacies for poverty and so mystifies and diverts attention from the real causes - slums, homelessness and economic exploitation. The casework ideology forces clients to be seen as needing to be changed to fit society. Social work has now expanded to include new (and not so new) tricks, such as community work, group work, welfare rights work, etc. which, when professionalised, end up by becoming the same sort of mechanism of control as traditional casework, often with the additional merit of being less expensive for the ruling class. Professionalism is a particularly dangerous development specifically because social workers look to it for an answer to many of the problems and contradictions of the job itself - i.e. being unable to solve the basic inadequacy of society through social work. It must be fought at every opportunity.

How we must organise

Organising independently of the state

The idea of the state as a neutral arbiter between different sections of society who may have some minor temporary differences is wholly inadequate if we are to understand the development of the welfare state and the role of the social worker . An understanding of the state is a vital prerequisite to effective action because, far from being neutral, the state in any class society represents the interests of the ruling class and has at its disposal the instruments necessary to keep it in power. Thus, in Britain, the state safeguards the interests and developments of British capitalism. Only on this basis can we make sense of the developments in the welfare state since the war and understand how we must organise. If the state cannot be neutral, it is important to analyse the expectations placed on social workers by the state, as our employer, and to access, in the light of this, where and how action supporting the class struggle is most effective.

We are supposed to "help" our "clients" by making them "accept responsibility" - in other words, come to terms as individuals with basically unacceptable situations. We must counterpose this to the possibility of changing their situation by collective action. We can only do this by acting collectively ourselves.

Therefore, we do not merely concentrate on democratizing a few of the state's outposts (such as social service departments) for all this does is to make them more efficient. We should fight for powers of veto over any decisions which are against our best interests and the interests of the people we are supposed to serve. We should also constantly demand the provision of improved services, geared to the real needs of the community. To be in a position to do this requires a lot more than office meetings and working parties. The crux of all our action must be to organise independently of the state and in the interests of the working class. These interests are in opposition to those of capitalism and its administrative tool - the state.

The trade unions

We should seek to pressurize the union leadership and fight for official positions ourselves, but our priority is to promote the development of rank-and-file organisation through fighting for democratic control by ordinary members of all levels of union organisation. We support the trade-union leaders to the extent that they support the struggles of the rank and file, but we must beware of letting the

union leaders take the struggle out of our hand and out of our control. To achieve real long-term gains we believe that the creation of a national rank-and-file organisation, uniting trade unionists at shop-floor level, is absolutely essential.

All social workers should join NALGO where possible, since this is the union that actually negotiates on behalf of most social workers. But obviously other organisations, such as NAPO for probation officers, will be more appropriate to some Case Con supporters. Social workers can make the union more democratic at a local level by setting up departmental committees and forging them into shop stewards' committees. But the fight for democratic control on any other level requires linking up with other militants. This should be done by joining or setting up a local NALGO action group or NAPO members' action group, and drawing on the experience of other militants through a national organisation. Links should be forged with other rank-and-file groups (e.g. Rank-and-File Teachers, the Hospital Worker, Nurses' Action Group), militant tenants groups and squatters.

We must beware of allowing our struggle to become one of passing motions in our union branches. We have to take concrete action to fight for what we believe in. For instance, on housing we should fight for local government workers to refuse to implement rent rises caused by the Housing Finance Act, support squatters who are taking direct action on the "housing problem", refuse to put people into bed and breakfast temporary accommodation, and demand adequate housing for all. In relation to racialism we should join the other public sector unions in refusing to have anything to do with anti-black legislation (for example, the Tory 'pass laws'). In the fight against repression we should insist that our union branches take up specific instances and join in the fight against them actively through pickets, conferences, industrial action, etc.

We must also beware of leaving behind our views when we come face to face with our "clients". Our social-work practice must be in line with our stand as trade unionists on issues such as racism, homelessness and repression. Our principles must come before individualism, professionalism and careerism.

A Socialist Conclusion

Case Con believes that the problems of our "clients" are rooted in the society in which we live, not in supposed individual inadequacies. Until this society, based on private ownership, profit and the needs of a minority ruling class, is replaced by a workers' state, based on the interests of the vast majority of the population, the fundamental causes of social problems will remain. It is therefore our aim to join the struggle for this workers' state.

IRON FISTS ... kid gloves

Any optimism about the growth of community work should be tempered with realism about the values of the ruling class in capitalist society. As a vehicle of state reforms community work may purvey predominant ideology, or, by coopting radicals, defuse opposition. Such reforms take on an aspect of Marcusian benign repression.

In the name of community work, the army in Northern Ireland transcended its P.R. and intelligence roles in adopting counter-insurgency tactics as delineated by Brigadier Frank Kitson in "Low Intensity Operations" (1969). As commander of Land Forces in Northern Ireland in 1971, Kitson could observe and refine his theories in operation. Successful counter-insurgency depends on isolating the guerillas either by winning the allegiance of the people or by random arrests and aggression, breaking up local social cohesion. "Unified planning, centralised control and a single point of responsibility" are essential. From central government certain powers are devolved to local committees comprising representatives of police, army and government. Some of the resulting structures and procedures continue today. Through such local committees the "good" groups within a divided community could be selected for government aid, playschemes and other rewards aimed to kindle further resentment and polarisation of the "bad".

For Kitson, reform is a technique for repression. He says that it is necessary to get a breathing space by promising that concessions will be made if there is a period of calm. Having got such a period it is urgent to implement the concessions, discover and "neutralize genuine subversives" and "associate as many prominent members of the population, especially those who have been engaged in non-violent action, with the government". (p.87) Co-optation here is not a regrettable outcome but a conscious policy.

It may be argued that Northern Ireland is unique and that therefore none of this is applicable elsewhere in the British Isles. But is the uniqueness an aberration, or is it the exception that proves some sort of rule?

bill rolston

Sugar and Spice

In this issue we are considering aspects of residential care. By the time that this magazine is distributed it is likely that the current legislation against sexual discrimination will be finalised. It seems timely therfore, to consider the whole question of sexism within the residential sector.

In residential work as in many jobs within the hospital system, there is a heavy emphasis on the concept of 'care', both physical and emotional. This is reflected all too often in distorted and preconcieved attitudes towards the roles and jobs allotted to both workers and residents. In particular relation to residential work with kids this process is accentuated by attempts to superimpose upon the residential unit ideas and structures which originated in the nuclear family.

While it is obvious that kids' homes hold the potential to break down many of these attitudes, in fact the reverse is often the case. The reasons for this are complex. Firstly, both pay and status within residential work are low, the work-force tends therefore to be mainly female which gives further visual reinforcement to the caring/domestic image attached to female residential workers. If there are only women around, then it is to women that the jobs of cooking and sock-sorting fall, and since this is often the expected image it is this that sticks. Furthermore, many of the kids in residential units are insecure and tend to have low self-images, and one of the simplest and most direct means of creating a secure atmosphere, of showing that we care, is through the media of food, clean clothes, darned socks etc. In my experience this is a difficult cycle to breal out of. The conventional wisdom, the popular image, leads many kids to look to the women, who predominate in the lower orders of the residential structure, to provide these things, and in this our domestic image is reinforced. The career structure within the social services tends to give the higher grade jobs, those of decision-making and management to men, which again further emphasises the lower status of women in the day to day work schedules. This situation creates a self-perpetuating cycle wherein the more active and forward looking women leave the residential sector for jobs where we are freer to express ourselves in non-sexist work-roles, and so, yet again, leave the work to be done by temporary staff or those who want jobs which express the conventional female image.

In many kids' homes, especially the smaller ones, it is common for the house-mother to be a married woman, living in a staff flat with a husband who goes out to WORK. This further emphasises the 'family' image on which the vast majority of such units are based. Often these men play a very real part in the evenings and weekends, but inevitably it is the conventional father image that is presented : the man out at work in the day and relaxing with the kids in the evening, while it is the housemother and her female assistant who will cook and serve tea and put the kids to bed.

It is difficult to see a clear way forward. Obviously one way is through Union participation which would improve work conditions and might thereby increase the job status, thus evening up the man/woman ratio in the lower grades. As the other articles in this issue point out it is often very difficult for residential workers to participate fully in union activities. It is often physically impossible to attend union meetings, therefore our voices go unheard, therefore our situation is slow to change. There are things we can do ourselves if we are strong enough. In a stressful work situation we tend to avoid that which is threatening, but if we are to change images within the workplace, and thus show the kids the way forward, we must be prepared to take an active role in the decision-making at least within the unit, and to support the men in situations where the kids, parents or other workers find it curious or derisive to see them in menial roles. If we can support each other through these situations, our newly found strength will extend to the kids who may then have a chance to work at overcoming their own sexist attitudes.

abigail goodden

PUBLIC CON

We need money, donations, subscriptions, bulk sellers, articles and labour power to produce the pilot issue of PUBLIC CON. The out-going CASE CON collective has commissioned articles for this issue, which is due for distribution in January, 1978, but new blood should whould bring new ideas. We want to provide as good a magazine as possible, as cheaply as possible. The centre pages of this issue set out in more detail the plans for the future. We hope you will be able to use the centre fold as a way of publicising PUBLIC CON. Copies will be available on request.

DONATIONS

We are asking for foundation subscriptions of £10, but any amount, greater of smaller is welcome as a donation. With 100 foundation subscriptions we could produce the first two issues of the new magazine. We are not offering any material benefits in return for this special subscription other than copies of the magazine free of charge for as long as this is financially workable.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The proposed subscription rate is £1.50 for 4 copies of the magazine, postage included. In the event of the new magazine folding for financial financial reasons after the first or subsequent issues, no money can be refunded. Existing subscriptions for CASE CON are being transferred to the new magazine and the same conditions for refunds. If any CASE CON subscriber is not in favour of this transfer to the new magazine a refund will be made in the amount of the remaining subscription.

BULK SELLERS

The collective is interested in obtaining as many bulk sellers as possible. Bookshop orders will be handled by the Publications Distribution Co-operative. Existing bulk sellers will be sent their usual order unless you specifically request to be withdrawn from our list.

ARTICLES & LABOUR POWER

Some articles for PUBLIC CON No 1 have been commissioned, but we are anxious to have news, views, articles, cartoons, etc, for it and subsequent issues, hopefully from the widest possible cross-section of Welfare State Workers. Similarly, the collective must expand its base in order to reflect the ideas of socialists in the Welfare State workforce. Regular meetings are being held. No previous experience required. Anyone interested please contact us. The copy date for issue number one of PUBLIC CON is 10 December, 1977. The lay-out will take place on the weekend on 7/8 January, 1978.

PUBLIC CON is temporarily based at 74 Lytton Road, Leytanstone, London E. 11. All enquiries regarding the above to this address.

BIG BENEFIT SOCIAL 4 NOV 1977

VENUE : NORTH LONDON POLYTECHNIC, LADBROKE HOUSE, Highbury HIGHBURY GROVE, LONDON N5 (nearest Tube at Highbury Corner).

DATE : FRIDAY 4TH. NOVEMBER

TIME : 8.00PM - 12.00PM. BAR EXTENSION TO MIDNIGHT

SOUNDS : THE TALBOTS, THE MEDWAY BLUES SINGERS + DISCO

TICKETS : 80P. (Claimants and students on grant, half price). AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR.

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