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## SOCIAL WELFARE: CONTEXT FOR SOCIAL CONTROL

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## ABSTRACT

Because human service professionals are uncritical concerning the latent functions of their organizations they may be unaware of their power as agents for social control. The paper discusses values, attitudes, and education supportive of such control, the permeation of social programs into heretofore private areas of human life, the power inherent in new techniques of social persuasion, and the centralization of that power because of expanded government funding and accountability requirements. As public assistance programs contain civil disorder among the poor, so other social welfare programs insure conformity and control the alienated of all levels of society.

Introduction

The traditional model of social welfare is that of a benign society offering aid to the less fortunate through the good works of human service professionals. Although we may no longer be idealistic about the planned beneficence of our society's structures and institutions, we are still unlikely to think of social welfare organizations as control mechanisms, or social workers as "soft cops" (Goroff, 1977). Perhaps because of the somewhat hallowed grounds of good intentions upon which social work is based, and our faith in the concept of "public good," we do not look at the underlying functions of the system. Our beliefs preclude awareness of the permeation of our lives by this ever-expanding institution and its latent functions for control.

Social control here does not simply refer to the normal regulatory processes of a complex and interdependent society. Society itself, in which the members define the normative boundaries by which they can live together, demands mechanisms for insuring certain standards of behavior, and these norms, roles, and expectations which are the bases for socialization allow us to live and work together more or less harmoniously. Our concern with social control for purposes of this paper has to do with more pernicious control, especially that hidden in the latent functions of social welfare practices. This control regulates aspects of personal life and, on the basis of decisions in which those being regulated have little opportunity for participation, impose a demand for order which maintains both systemic social inequalities and an unquestioning conformity to society.

With the exception of work with involuntary clients, such as in the criminal justice system or with people with severe behavior disorders, we do not ordinarily see social work as controlling. To consider family service or community mental

health agencies, Boy Scouts or United Way in this manner may seem strange indeed. Moreover, social workers are generally unaware of the extent of their control. Most people enter the human service field from feelings of caring, wanting to help, to serve--to love. Perlman says

This is what the human services in all their forms are for--  
to meet human needs in ways that deepen and fulfill the sense  
of social caring and responsibility between fellow human  
beings (1979:54).

It is unlikely, therefore, that we see ourselves as intermediaries for control or question the purposes or sources of that control.

We take the position here that most if not all social agencies control far more efficiently than we in the profession of social work realize. Moreover, there are two aspects to this. The first is that those members of society who are particularly disadvantaged by social inequalities bear the heaviest burden of control, since they already deviate from mainstream American society in many ways--poverty, being of non-white ethnicity, single mothers and dependent children, for examples. The second is the expansion of governmentally funded and controlled services into areas of life heretofore not considered amenable to such intervention. This latter has multiple effects. In addition to assuring systemic inequalities for the disadvantaged, it fosters conformity and its corollaries: unquestioning attitudes about society and less tolerance for deviance for self or others. Next, it reifies definitions of deviance, for the government requires standard "facts" for accountability. Further, through expanding programs for those already considered deviant, it subjects more people to more sophisticated techniques of reporting. Finally, it expands definitions of deviance in competition for more funding, and takes those definitions across socioeconomic lines.

As technology frees more people to enter service professions, as more government money is invested in programs to "solve" social problems, and as social welfare organizations permeate society even more--from work to worship, from instruction in child care to coping with dying--we must look closely at social work as social control. Otherwise we become agents of that control, supporting and legitimating it, in a managed society.

#### Perspectives on Control

Throughout history, as the institution of social welfare developed, there have been two major elements within it. The first and most obvious is the humanitarian one--helping people in need, doing good for whatever altruistic or personal benefits were derived. The second is less obvious. Historically it is clear that political support for programs to aid those in need has come only at times when other systems, political constraints, and economic realities have required it (Piven and Cloward, 1971). This was true whether the intent was to keep people within prescribed areas to work for the economic gain of others (Statute of Laborers, 1349, and more recent county general assistance laws), to contain civil disorder initiated by the disadvantaged (as, the War on Poverty, 1965), or to insure that workers and the public at large would not become so alienated from the inauthentic demands of present-day society as to undermine the forces which keep society at status quo (expansion of Community Mental Health Acts).

These two historic elements are tied together in the profession of social work, where a large number of people are supported with public funds and legitimation for "doing good." Those eager to serve, help, or reform have accepted support for the sake of their own good works. Whether they are unaware of the political implications of that support or if they deliberately choose to use it in the service of their own objectives matters little in terms of the control it fosters. Even our definitions of social problems push us into a subtle trap. Rule suggests that we have defined certain situations and behaviors as "social problems" when in reality they are political conflicts. We thereby imply that by applying our expert knowledge the problems can be solved, and we ignore their causative political bases. He says that

Social problem-solving...is a profoundly political enterprise ...and its ideology is none the less important for being concealed...[this] may unfortunately lead people to believe that the politics have somehow been taken out of policy...this vision is dangerous because of the prospect that a government desperate to cool off brewing social conflicts and a community of professionals hungry for recognition may find it an irresistible vehicle (Rule, 1978:23-26).

Thus, we legitimate a false reality and aid in concealment of need for conflict solutions. In doing so we may claim the neutrality of objectivity, but in conflict situations where there is uneven distribution of power, neutrality favors the more powerful. To understand the work we do, we must define social problems as political problems (Goroff, 1977), and consider social work to be political action. Through this, we may be able to determine for whom our altruism is at work.

#### Public Monies and Expanding Programs

Until about 1960, most human services were limited by costs, availability, and stigma for users to emergency types of assistance--economic, medical, psychiatric, and so forth. Piven and Cloward (1971) note the financial measures taken to control the civil disorders and disruptions of the sixties. Their analysis deals primarily with expansion of financial welfare services to quiet and coopt the poor. However, implications extend to those who, though not poor, were politically alienated during the sixties. It provides through extrapolation a rationale for expansion of programs other than financial which were offered to maintain people in or return the alienated to mainstream American belief and behavior.

This new alienation was the result of a growing awareness among many people of the inauthenticity of American values as they applied to economic resources, the politics of scarcity, systemic inequalities for non-white persons, women, and others, and international politics. Though many of the poor were among those so alienated, programs for poverty alone could not quell the political unrest. This called for a different kind of control, which came through such programs as the community mental health movement with its expanded definitions of "mental illness" and the idea of a "right" to mental health. Programs of this sort, added and expanded through massive input of government funds, cannot be demonstrated to have quieted the alienated or to have returned them to middle-class values. Nonetheless, the latent functions of such expanded programs evidence themselves in present-day

social and political quietus and an apparent retrenchment to values apparent before the 1960 disruptions.

Among the forces of legitimation for the mental health movement, in addition to pressures from the social work profession for expansion and massive federal funding, was mass media advertising. Stivers says

The helping professions and their agencies and organizations, most of which are state-supported, sell their services to the public. Advertising against alcoholism, drug addiction, and mental illness, as well as advertising in favor of seeking "professional" help for almost every problem are presented as public service messages on radio and television...(1977:388).

This is not to deny the usefulness of the programs nor the altruistic nature of those working in them. Rather, it notes their latent functions--public intrusion into private lives, expanding definitions of deviance, and new pressures for and legitimation of conformity. Stivers continues

As society becomes more rigidly organized, new kinds of behavior become a threat to that increased organization.... This fact is not grasped simply by an examination of the number of social control agents and the increased efficiency of their intervention techniques...but rather by the incursion of treatment into areas of people's lives previously untouched...(1977:388).

New kinds of behavior manifested from alienation included, for example, the women's movement, which had implications for the breakdown of family life, traditional sex role expectations, and relationships between parents and children. New programs to strengthen family life, to increase parent-child communication, to provide child care at places of employment, and to deal with the stresses of work are some of the results. The proliferation of such new information and techniques, and their availability to those who wish to use them, are very positive. In fact, in many ways, it is time that society assumed responsibility for many of these problems. However, it is also time that we become aware of more far-reaching results than the immediate service. To use only one example, consider the benefits of day care for children of working mothers, a program highly encouraged by the women's movement. True, it may free some women, particularly those not in poverty, from dependence, and provide them with self-fulfilling and creative activity. It also ensures more people in the labor force, a benefit not only to the women but to the employer, and this is particularly problematic for displaced homemakers, women without education and training who can only work in low wage jobs, and so forth. It may perpetuate inequalities for those already disadvantaged as only one latent function.

Also, what of the children placed in day care, and particularly those which are state-supported for families dependent on AFDC money? Are those children provided all the benefits of a creative and mind-expanding center, such as we have the knowledge and resources to provide? Is freedom given so as to ensure movement toward fulfillment of potential and curiosity? Or is the day care center at worst a warehouse and at best another agency teaching the values of conformity, the joys of non-deviance? These are the questions we must ask--the balance of benefit should go to people who are being served, if our ethical stance as a profession means anything. Without being aware of the latent functions of such programs, that stance in fact can mean very little.

Furthermore, it is naive to assume that regulations regarding funding contracts have no bearing on the kinds of services available to clients, or the limitations on those services in scope and quality. Often, in search of funding for survival, organizations jump on fad bandwagons, extending domains in response to a constituency of government or special interest groups rather than to client needs. The proliferation of programs along certain lines--child abuse, law enforcement, community mental health--may give more total services but may neglect whole areas of need while placing greater numbers at risk in terms of surveillance, reporting, diagnoses of deviance, and processing through court or state systems.

#### Dimensions of Control

Within the "society-set" of government as beneficent and social work as the action arm of this beneficence there are certain broad dimensions of control. Among these are attitudes and values of social workers, the social work education process, and the organizational setting and technology of social work. In technology are included models of intervention, definitions of deviance and diagnoses, recording and reporting, and the use of sophisticated information systems and evaluative techniques.

#### 1. Values and Attitudes

The initial value orientation of most people entering the profession is probably humanitarian--a desire to help, to aid the unfortunate, to learn skills for service to others. However, this orientation is translated through belief systems, backgrounds, and contending values in each person. Brill points out the dichotomies that exist in our societal value system.

We hold that all people are equal, but that those who do not work are less equal.... We hold that individual life has worth, but that only the fit should survive. We believe that we are responsible for each other, but that those who are dependent upon others for their living are of lesser worth (1978:12).

She says further that effective workers must be aware of themselves as walking value systems, be conscious of what those values are, evaluate them rationally, and change those which are not rational (14-15). Unfortunately, because values are so closely connected to self-concept, real change is not easily achieved through the educational process.

It is difficult to admit that, where helping is the goal, power is an issue. Yet this is a major value problem. Regardless of the reason for intervention, a superior-subordinate relationship is inherent in the situation.

Frequently there is an ideology of paternalism and non-reciprocity permeating...social service institutions. The inequality in power and authority reflected in the vertical relationship parading as a professional relationship (Coroff, 1977:3).

The organization itself is a symbol of society's power, and it legitimizes social work expertise and denotes the client's status in seeking help. The worker is the expert, and the client comes to the service as petitioner.

Even the value of "wanting to help the less fortunate," the reason expressed by many for choosing social work as a career, is a power statement. It implies that clients lack something, and need to be brought up to our, or society's, levels or standards of functioning. Though wanting to help, in pure form, is the basis of human service work, we must not consider our clients as somehow less than whole persons whom we, as experts and whole persons, have the ability, knowledge, and the right to round out, remake, fulfill, or "pull up" to our level. The fact that there is a "right way" which the expert knows and a "wrong way" which the client does underlies and colors the whole intervention process. Even laying out alternatives may be problematic, for the worker, because of his/her beliefs and values, may choose to express only those most viable from personal perspectives. The client, of course, is likely to follow expert advice because of the power concepts behind it.

Values about social work as a loving profession have control ramifications also. Somehow we may feel that because what we do is inspired by love it can have only beneficial effects. This view can deny clients the objective technology and empathetic responses they need to take action against their problems. Moreover, this kind of love has within it a possessiveness which may burden clients in another way. It is difficult to care about a client who does not, in exchange, show appreciation or gratitude. Where "love" is the service, gratitude may be the price. Lack of this coin of return is often defined by the worker as resistance, aggression, or unwillingness to participate. So-called client recalcitrance, which may in fact be a positive attempt at assertiveness, may then negatively influence the entire course of intervention.

From the opposite angle, however, many practitioners who realize the importance of objectivity and technology have almost removed themselves from a caring relationship with clients, except as a philosophical stance. They know that love is not enough, but go to the other extreme, where technology is all-important. It may become an exercise in client manipulation--as examples, some kinds of behavior modification, certain kinds of esoteric group therapy techniques, or techniques made so routine as to become "recipes" to effect certain changes. The result here is dehumanization for both client and worker, for the establishment of relationship--a loving and caring interplay between helper and client--is, according to Perlman, the heart of helping. It is

...human response to human need in any problem situation...  
to not recognize the need for and importance of relationship  
is to negate humanism, and to dehumanize those desperately in  
need of this essential bonding force in human life (1979:22-23).

In either of the extremes, the worker has control and power, and may use it for his/her own gratification and/or purposes to the detriment of client rights and needs. Intervention may become an action upon the client rather than in service of the client.

Though there are other controlling values deserving of note, such as sexism, racism, prejudice for the nuclear family, and so forth, the last to be considered here is that of social class. This has two major parameters. The first is that most social workers come from middle-class backgrounds, and some have only recently attained to that status through hard work and determination. They often believe

in and reflect those values of work, education, perceptions of family life, deviance, and so forth. Attitudes toward and treatment of the client may demand that those values be adopted rather than they be assessed to determine their relevance to the client's interests and needs. Secondly, social class values seem often to include beliefs about the poor and others labeled deviant which assume that they have deliberately chosen deviance and refuse to aspire to middle American beliefs. These ideas, of course, are belied by such studies as done by Goodwin (1972), Kallen and Miller (1971), Burch (1974), and others.

The effects of social class values pervade the practice of social work. For example, Grimm and Orten find that negative student attitudes toward the poor may not be neutralized by graduate social work education, and specifically note that professional education must be geared to correct this (1973). Briar (1961) empirically demonstrates that middle class clients are viewed more positively than are lower class clients, and Fischer and Miller (1973) find significant social class effects that consistently favor middle class clients. Friedman and Berg note evidence to demonstrate that "...a social class bias is present in mental health professionals and that it works to the detriment of the lower class client" (1978:47).

That report also shows that workers' social class origins are critical variables in determining how clients will be viewed, particularly in combination with variables concerning clients' socioeconomic class. It suggests that social class biases are not a phenomena unique to clinicians coming from certain classes but have a halo effect on judgments made by all clinicians (45-51). Finally, in a study on job preferences of graduate social workers, Day et al. (1976) find a marked dispreference for working in organizations for the poor. Though this may be due in part to the nature of bureaucracies serving the poor or the lack of clinical practice possible there, the movement of such workers away from poverty agencies is clear.

## 2. Social Work Education

Though in social work education the value base of practice has major emphasis, there is little indication that students are taught, or can be taught, values. Whole sections of beginning texts deal with values (see Piccard, 1978; Morales and Sheafor, 1977; Brill, 1978; among others). Yet even when students begin their educations with positive values toward clients they may lose them in the educational process. Varley finds, for example, major shifts of values while in schools of social work for students. Most of these shifts are not in the expected or desired direction (in Koerin, 1977:87).

One of the values apparently reinforced in some schools is that of adherence to the organization. Goroff finds, in a study of 200 students, that they come to school with either an individualistic (pro-client) or a bureaucratic orientation. Upon graduation, the bureaucrats' orientation had not changed, and more than 80% of the others had changed to a bureaucratic orientation. The remaining were seen by peers and faculty as "different" (1977:6-7). The idea that being graduated without a bureaucratic orientation is to be seen as different is perhaps the most troublesome aspect of the study. Although it is surely necessary to learn to practice within the constraints of an organization, those must be recognized as constraints



rather than as proper bounds for service. Despite social work values, it appears that as educators we may be imparting values oriented to the bureaucracy, to the social worker as "organization man," and to a non-individualistic attitude toward clients.

One of the major emphases in social work education is the importance of the diagnostic or medical model of interpersonal practice--the idea is that people have individual pathologies rather than having problems many of which are responses to "other-system" pressures. Despite research demonstrating the adverse effects of labeling and its lack of utility to the client (Wood, 1978:437-458), we persist in teaching this model. Davis and Stivers point out that labeling has as much to do with controlling normative behavior as with the reality of "emotional" or "mental" illness. They present the following quote by a mental health professional defining schizophrenia (Cameron, 1963:587, in Davis and Stivers, 1978:80-81) and follow it with their normative interpretation:

After a steady downward course, the decline may come to a halt at some relatively low level of adaptation. Here the patient often lives an idle, ineffectual, and apparently meaningless life. If his level of adaptation is very low, or his behavior too unpredictable, he may require permanent institutional care. If not, he may lounge about the house or the neighborhood as an irresponsible idler, or wander aimlessly from place to place as a vagrant.

The simple schizophrenic is often an irresponsible idler (moral judgment) who is apathetic and does not live up to his potential (maladjusted, as it is normal to want to get ahead) and may become a vagrant (legal category). In short the simple schizophrenic is not normal, is immoral, and might even be a petty criminal. His major offenses would appear to be laziness and indifference....

### 3. Organization and Technology

Technologies are the techniques or tools by which a profession carries out the actions which will achieve the goals of its work. It has been said that human services are part science and part art, but a clearer statement is that they are ...neither a science nor an art, but a technology trying to achieve controlled changes in natural relationships via relatively standardized procedures which are scientifically based (Jaffe, 1978:381).

Saleeby and Hunter note that "...the need for technologies is obvious, but their development in a moral vacuum is dangerous..." (1977:62). Because technology has become so vastly important in legitimating the professional nature of social work, it may often be carried out without realization of the moral issues involved. Stivers puts it succinctly--

The end of technique is efficiency and order, and its use in human affairs results in the adjustment of man to his environment. Technique is the realm wherein means become ends and facts become values.... The rationality of technique

involves the reduction of the spontaneous to logic, to method ...when the still non-technical dimensions of human life come into contact with technique, they become subject to it.... The final result is a technical civilization originally set in motion to free man but which in turn has enslaved him (1975: 378-379).

An example of this is the medical model with its use of labeling, as mentioned above. It is considered professional, useful, and legitimate by most social agencies. Therefore, social workers willingly perpetuate the control inherent in the practice. That is their job.

The first technique addressed here has to do with therapeutic techniques of counseling, and the second with organization--the necessities of bureaucratization and the techniques of gathering, assessing, cumulating, storing, and retrieving data. These latter operations are becoming more common and more legitimate in social agencies both because of the availability and ease of data processing techniques, and governmental requirements for accountability in the use of public funds.

#### 1) Technologies of Persuasion

Stivers says

All of the techniques of human intervention are ideologically defended as in man's best interest, to help him adjust and conform, often in ways in which he is led to feel that he is expressing his individuality: underlying such techniques are the assumptions of and preference for a basic compatibility if not total synthesis of man and society (1975:387).

The reasoned perception by theorists and social workers of non-conforming people as pathological, the proliferation of organizations to "help" them to conform, and the overwhelming message given through mass media and socializing institutions in support of non-deviance through mental health leave little room for those who do not "fit in." Worse, not "fitting in," being harmlessly different, is often seen as deviance by the people so labeled. Convinced of the necessity to conform, worried that their natural reactions to stress are "emotional instabilities," confused by their alienation to a society which promises so much, they hasten to be "redone," cured by the social experts. They become more stressed when they cannot meet the expectations of those people who "know" what good behavior and good emotions are, and may be lost as whole persons in the process of diagnosis, labeling, treatment, and conformation. Though there are surely some people who, for whatever reasons, cannot cope with problems alone, this number is probably minimal in comparison with the number of people processed by social agencies.

Any human service intervention has inherent within it elements of power and dependency, and therefore involves social persuasion. Whether that intervention be the state as *parens patriae* removing a child from its natural parents, the AFDC program granting financial assistance, or therapeutic counseling to help hold a marriage together, the client comes to the relationship as dependent petitioner. Indeed the act of seeking help, admitting to dependence or loss of personal power, is prerequisite to intervention. Such dependence, as necessary as it may be, lends a vulnerability on the part of the client that enhances the use of power and therefore control.

In some cases, particularly those which deal with programs for the poor, such control is matter-of-fact, taken for granted. We are well aware of the class inequities represented in both criminal and juvenile justice systems. In the first, the system supports the illusion that crime is the product of a small group of personally dangerous criminals who come primarily from the lower socioeconomic class. This focuses attention away from the social, financial, and personal costs of offenses of people in white-collar crime and corporate manipulation. In the second, where the system was originally intended to protect children rather than punish them, most rights of due process, though guaranteed by law, have been in practice removed from children and their families (Sarri, 1974). In both adult and juvenile justice systems, it is evident that the majority of those apprehended, tried, convicted, and incarcerated (or whatever euphemisms may be used for juvenile justice) are poor and non-white (Sarri, 1974:65).

Control is more subtle in other agencies. While we may be aware of the discretionary power of AFDC to control family budgets or remove children from the home "for their own good," few of us consider that public assistance programs are also normative controls which maintain marriage and sex role expectations. Dependence and sexual "morality" for women are assured by surveillance for "suitability of home" and discretionary use of programs. For men, harsh requirements for eligibility and for continued assistance revolve around attachment to the work force even when disabilities or economic conditions prevent their employment (Day, 1979).

Beyond those agencies which have overt control, many are available for people who have not yet done anything "wrong." They offer help to remain "right" according to so-called middle class values--the nuclear family, the supporting father and wife and mother roles for women, individual achievement through education and work, the correct way to bring up children, and so on. There are two reasons why it is difficult to criticize such organizations as Boy and Girl Scouts, Family Services, Mental Health Agencies, or recreational organizations. The first is that, along with such institutions as schools and churches, they are engaged in protecting society and its people by teaching normative standards. The second, however, is that they also teach not to question or criticize the functions of society and its norms. While they stress achievement they may also teach derogation of those who do not achieve, and the importance of monetary reward--if something does not have a computable economic value it may not be worth having, or being, or doing. While they help with marriage or job adjustment, they may place societally imposed limits on individual freedom. And so on--for every positive function, there may be one which is negative. As workers, we must recognize our responsibility for both, but as we also have been taught, we may not perceive the latent functions or know how to criticize them.

It is unlikely that most social agencies aim at control per se. Yet the techniques exist for control and are used throughout the social welfare institution to some degree. These techniques range from interpersonally oriented therapies such as empathy, modelling, gestalt, or psychoanalytical techniques, for example, through those which involve use of mood-altering drugs, hypnosis, or behavior modification. Moreover, in addition to conscious learning and/or problem-solving, other learning may take place which obviates volition and enhances reliance on external controls. Even the most beneficent therapy is based on scientific knowledge of methods which

...analyze traditional types of rewards, such as money, esteem, approval, and status, and discover which are most efficient in which circumstances. Such knowledge produces a powerful tool, a truly scientific method of social control... (Partridge, 1978:143).

Add to this that clients learn that some other agent is responsible for behavior and for happiness--the therapist, drugs, hypnosis, society--and there is even more vulnerability for social control.

Throughout even our most benign agencies runs the underlying theme of conformity and an emphasis which teaches that to question authority, whether at the personal or political level, is not to be tolerated in ourselves or in others. Conformity to the status quo, as we are taught, has both political and economic ramifications. For example, one of the obvious aspects of community political economy is the conduct of business of United Way. The organization effectively controls by finances the scope and kinds of programs offered by member agencies. It is in turn controlled by business and organizational interests of the community, and we may be sure of the attention paid to conservatism, to maintenance of the status quo, to providing primarily middle class services, and to the promotion of business interests (Chernow, 1978:15-18).

To not know how to perceive that there are problems in our society, or to be unable to question why that society is inauthentic for so many, is a bitter thing. It affects us personally, the groups of which we are a part or care about, and the nation as a whole. We must recognize that our social agencies have a part in helping people to be lock-stepped in place--gently, lovingly--but lock-stepped none the less.

## 2) The Computer Never Forgets

Much of the software of human services cannot be categorized, nor should it be. The uniqueness of each individual and the ramifications of his/her problems, the creation of a relationship, the judgments and choices involved in that relationship, all militate against classification, categorization, and quantification. Yet increased government funding and the competition for it, require program evaluation, and the easiest kind of evaluation is counting the numbers of people served. Since the long-range effects of human service programs are difficult to assess, organizational procedures turn to an easier evaluation. Once in the organizational habit of assessing quantity, quality becomes secondary. It is, of course, essential that we be held accountable for expenditure of public monies. Nevertheless, dehumanization and loss of attention to quality can be the real effects of such accountability.

In speaking of the systems approach so widely used today, Hoos says

So enticing has been the prospect of a "social balance sheet" however, that social scientists, who should know better, and bureaucrats and politicians, who cannot be expected to know better, have allowed themselves to overlook the shortcomings and inadequacies of the systems approach (Hoos, 1972:78).

Practitioners in social work should know even better, perhaps. Unfortunately, once the substitution emphasizing quantity becomes part of agency process, it may be difficult to re-include components of quality and effectiveness.

The problems posed by wider cumulation of data must also be considered. There is a movement now from computer systems to interlocking networks of computers. Recording and reporting techniques are sophisticated enough that To the degree that coordination becomes a reality...to the degree that records are kept accurately, the ability of an individual to "forget" and be "forgotten" becomes less possible (Berry, 1975:358).

In the past, community-wide client registers were eliminated because of the danger of intrusion into client privacy they presented. Today we have a much more accurate and speedy type of client information system, and because it is a new technology practitioners are delighted rather than concerned.

This computer based network allows scores of community mental health centers and state hospitals to feed clinical data on individual patients into one central facility (Laska, 1975:315).

This not only permits a "client treatment package," it lends itself to surveillance of clients by any number of officials, for computer banks are easily accessed and interlocked.

Moreover, some are beginning to see that such central information systems can be used to forestall dysfunction by reducing rates of occurrence of particular disorders in the population.

Data contained in the record, such as diagnosis, demography, and location, aggregated for specified time periods, may identify the distribution of behavioral disorders and possible determinants...Demographic analysis of communities must be interfaced with the demographic characteristics of populations currently being served so that high-risk sub-groups...can be identified, coordination of services enhanced, and community well-being facilitated (Laska, 1975:32).

We already know who the populations at risk are, since social science has catalogued particular social problems as more likely to affect the poor, minority groups, women, and other disadvantaged people. Those groups most likely to be oppressed by systemic inequalities, and therefore alienated, are those who will be even more subject to surveillance and "preventative measures." As we know, the likely result of increasing programs is to increase reporting and the spiral of labeling. Not only do more people become aware that they are deviant but they go on record in the community as deviants. It is in the interest of the organization to expand its clientele, and

As more agencies...become members of networks...there is improvement in detection systems as well as...an increased viability in the definitions of deviance.... As the definitions are more widely used and...more viable, the need for treatment becomes prominent in the mind of the public. These definitions, because of their official nature, become methods by which individuals...carry with them permanent or at least long term consequences (Berry, 1975:358).

If Stivers is right in saying that where technology impacts against humanity it overwhelms it, the human services, their workers, and clients may all be lost in dehumanization as technology rolls over social welfare.

#### Conclusion: The Political Economy of Social Welfare

The social welfare institution in America is huge. It entails large bureaucracies at all levels of government and many private organizations closely linked to each other and to the public sector through professional ties and funding sources. It employs thousands, from case aides to highest level professionals. The amount of money spent in services, programs, agency maintenance, and direct financial aid and services is enormous. We would be naive to believe that such an enterprise has been undertaken as a "pure public good." First this assumes that there is such a thing as pure public good, and secondly that there is agreement among people as to what it is.

Moreover, to envision social welfare as having utility beyond mere good will, as we must if we are to understand its enormity, we must assume that its utility lies in service to other than clients. This is especially true given the level of services provided to some. We postulate, therefore, that the utility, though altruistic in part, derives more fully from the social control it offers, and the support for systems and organizations which implement that control.

Looking at social welfare's political economy, we see on one level a real financial input. There is, for example, social work employment, from university professors studying deviance or teaching social work to the suppliers of food, bedding, and equipment for institutions. Salaries and welfare payments input into local economies, providing economic and social benefits beyond the "market power" of individuals in aggregate. Certainly the maintenance of a low wage work force and control of civil disorder as postulated by Piven and Cloward benefit local as well as other economic systems (1971).

On another level, it is astute politically and economically to keep people in conformity to certain ideals and beliefs, and to encourage them to doubt themselves rather than to question inequalities and alienation from the wider system. By thus defusing personal frustration into personal blame, social action against problems is vitiated. By redefining conflict as social problem and putting us to work at solutions, we have a semblance of action which accomplishes little but maintains control. Social workers are implicated as middlemen in this, and we need to know what interests we are forwarding with our good works. If there were nothing to question about the American Way of Life we would not need to be concerned, but as Stivers says

...the techniques of organization, treatment, and communication for the social control of deviant behavior are related to other human techniques such as education, industrial relations, and leisure. Taken together, they form a massive attack on human individuality (1977:388).

Human service technology is inextricably bound to the growth of the therapeutic state, for it offers the methods by which control can be maintained.

The problem with the therapeutic state is its insatiable desire to restructure our social and cultural environments

under the banners of prevention and rehabilitation both through the cooptation of the potentially maladjusted at an earlier and earlier age and the sponsorship of therapy for everyone.... The real issue is not the growth of the therapeutic state but the growth of and centralization of power within the state... (Stivers, 1975:389-390).

If we believe in a controlling elite in our society, and a study of the political and economic systems surely make one tend toward that conclusion, then we must see ourselves as agents of social control. Our human feelings as well as our technological talents are being used. Our own desires for increasingly potent technologies in the service of others, our subjugation of idealism to the use of power, are contributing to a society of control and conformity.

The discussion above has different implications for different sets of people. For theorists it entails a scientific study of the practices of social welfare for controlling functions, and a working partnership with social work practitioners in understanding and use of such research. For educators and administrators in schools and programs of social work, it requires a re-evaluation of the product goals they may have for students. Client advocacy and the perpetuation or instillation of positive client orientations and values appropriate to social action are essential. Moreover, we must educate our students in the means and uses of policy analysis at all levels of practice, and in a practical understanding of the place of the social work professional in the complex organization.

For social work practitioners and their professional associations, there must be continuing emphasis on latent as well as manifest functions of the organization, its services, and its processes. Policy must become one of the most important considerations in practice. Where it is detrimental to clients or is seen as more beneficial to others, a professional position must be taken and upheld.

Awareness of social work as social control may not change the control. But we need to realize that we are implicated in the controlling functions of an inequitable society. We must at least know that. Those of us in the profession because of a desire to find truth or from altruistic beliefs about human needs and services need at least to look honestly at what we do with our good works, negatively as well as positively. Given that, we may shed new light on both theory and action on social problems, client problems, and social welfare as social control.

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