December 1988

Neil Brock, Social Worker: Twenty-Five Years Later

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This article reviews the role of the social worker, Neil Brock (played by George C. Scott) in the TV series, East Side/West Side which aired in 1963/64. The series is placed within the context of the social, political, economic environment of the 1960s. The analysis includes how Brock's character was developed, the role played by NASW, responses to the series by TV critics and social workers, and the role of television in portraying a profession.

"It's War, Man", "Creeps Live Here", "Who Do You Kill?" and "The Beatnik and the Politician" may not sound familiar to television viewers, but if prodded with the hint that they are titles of episodes of a popular television series from the early 1960s (the 1963/64 television season) about social work, an avid (and middle-aged) viewer may well remember that, for a brief season, the work of social work was broadcast in livingrooms across the nation every Monday evening in the program, East Side/West Side. ES/WS was produced by David Susskind for CBS, sponsored by Philip Morris, Inc., and Whitehall Pharmaceutical Division of American Home Products, and fully supported by the National Association of Social Workers. George C. Scott played the role of Neil Brock, a New York City social worker. The other two regular performers were Elizabeth Wilson, Brock's supervisor at Community Welfare Services, and Cicely Tyson, a social worker aide (working on her MSW) at the agency.

It has been 25 years since Neil Brock was portrayed as the prototype social worker and it is fitting that, at his quarter century birthday, an assessment be made of that portrayal. The profession of social work, like other professions, occurs in a
social, political, and economic context. As Cohen (1955) pointed out at the time of NASW's birth as the unifying single professional organization for social workers, professional social work is intimately tied up with the economic, political, and social climate prevailing in the society as a whole. Thus, placing the series within the proper environmental context is an important component of understanding the social work portrayal.

The Environment of the Early 1960s

ES/WS occurred in an environment of rapid social change; any analysis of the series must be viewed in this framework. The early 1960s represented a most interesting period; it followed a decade during which time the Eisenhower Administration spent little effort on passing social legislation and immediately preceded a period of enormous social change. Yet, the 1950s and early 1960s were not completely still; movement was afoot in several areas and interest in leading social problems escalated during this time. Several elements converged to set the stage for what was to be known as the "War on Poverty."

The Late 1950s

During the 1950s, Eisenhower's presidency was considered a quiet period with little social legislation enacted; however, the administration was willing to preserve much of the New Deal's welfare system. The Eisenhower Administration had been sustained by the doctrine that economic growth would reduce inequalities and resolve social problems. A progressive tax structure, expanded welfare services, mass public education, and the G.I. Bill were all meant to stimulate economic growth and redistribute income. However, by the mid-fifties, it was clear that prosperity alone was not distributing its benefits to all segments of the population (Marris and Rein, 1969).

The economic doctrine which had justified government inaction in the 1950s was seen as a contributing factor to the worsening social conditions and it became apparent that several issues were related to this doctrine: the slower economic growth, unemployment, racial problems, neglect of education, and more and more young people competing in the labor force. Reform efforts of the late 1950s and early 1960s were a reflection of this decade.
Economists

By the middle of the century a new group of economists emerged who suggested that American society had achieved, politically and economically, an ideal mix that could be described as neither purely capitalistic nor purely socialistic. They argued persuasively that the economy was so strong that both military and domestic needs could be met without straining the economic base of the country. They agreed that the diverse interests in society would always unite to prevent an elite from destroying democracy; at the same time, they rejected the notion of an inevitable class conflict. They considered their views to be "realistic" and thus evolved the term "Realist School of Economics" to define them. The major proponents, according to Ekirch (1973), were John Kenneth Galbraith, *American Capitalism* (1952) and *The Affluent Society* (1958); David Lilienthal, *Big Business: A New Era* (1953); and Adolf A. Biru, Jr., *The Twentieth Century Capitalist Revolution* (1954).

"Gray Areas" Project

The Ford Foundation accepted the notion that the country had the resources to combat the social ills that had become so apparent in the 1950s. "Gray Areas" referred to neighborhoods located between downtown and the suburbs—areas of increasingly youthful, unemployed, minority people of color, living in substandard housing and facing a bleak future. Between 1961 and 1964, grants were given to several demonstration sites to show how the problems of those who lived in the inner city could be combated through improving educational facilities, youth programs and, in general, improving the physical and social needs of the inhabitants. Agencies were developed at each site which became models for the community action agencies under the Economic Opportunity Act (Marris and Rein, 1969).

A growing concern with the decay of city life led the Ford Foundation (along with the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime) to conceive a new approach to community change. They were not interested in looking at poverty or delinquency as single variable cause and effect issues. Rather, they were convinced that social problems had to be understood as the outcome of many interrelated factors; they
concluded that any remedy would have to depend on correspondingly multi-sided action (Marris and Rein, 1969).

Rediscovery of Poverty

In 1962, Michael Harrington, in *The Other America*, exposed the misery and deprivation of a "new" poor. This group, left out of the nation's economic growth and represented by the sick, disabled, old, minorities of color, and members of female-headed families, had not benefitted from post-World War prosperity. Two other books in 1962 confirmed Harrington's thesis: *Wealth and Power in America* by Gabriel Kolko and *Income and Welfare in the United States* by James Morgan. After the release of these books, poverty was front-page news for the first time since the depression of the 1930s (Patterson, 1981).

In January, 1963, Dwight McDonald provided an exhaustive summary of previous studies on poverty in an important article titled "Our Invisible Poor" in the *New Yorker* magazine. He stated that mass poverty persisted and that it was one of two grave social problems, the other being the relationship of poverty to race. He concluded that the federal government was the only force that could reduce poverty and make the lives of the poor more bearable.

Kennedy Administration

John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1960, particularly in West Virginia, heightened the public's consciousness of poverty. Once elected, he established the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime which sponsored employment programs, manpower training, remedial education, anti-discrimination activities and neighborhood service centers in several cities. Many aspects of these programs later became features of the War on Poverty. Two other programs passed during the Kennedy Administration which helped prepare the way for the War on Poverty: The Area Redevelopment Act, passed in 1961, provided federal dollars to improve public facilities and to provide technical assistance and retraining. In 1962, Congress enacted the Manpower Development and Training Act. The premise of this act was that unemployment was not just a cyclical phenomenon but, for some, would be a chronic way of life,
without public intervention. It was sold to Congress as a way of helping people help themselves and thereby get off welfare (Patterson, 1981).

**Television Programming**

The television industry changed drastically during this period and ES/WS needs to be understood within the context of this change. The structural arrangement characteristic of television in the 1950s, when sponsors bought time from the networks, produced or contracted for the production of programs, and exercised tight control, was changed in 1960 when the networks assumed control over program productions and the composition of their schedules. Sponsors were now being called advertisers and bought minutes from the networks rather than the longer time periods they had formerly controlled. It was at this time that ABC initiated the practice of "counter programming"—scheduling programs likely to draw audiences away from the networks. Soon all three networks were engaged in a highly competitive rating race (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977).

In 1962, television was thrust into the "space age" when the first American, John Glenn, was shot into orbit while television audiences watched it live. In July, 1962, Telstar I, a communication satellite, went into orbit and, within a month, the Communications Satellite Act of 1962 became law. This Act placed international satellite communication firmly in the private sector; and it authorized the creation of COMSAT, the Communications Satellite Corporation (Barnouw, 1970). Additionally, each network, in 1963, expanded its fifteen minute evening news broadcast to thirty minutes and for the first time, a majority of people told Roper researchers that their primary source of news was television rather than newspapers (Barnouw, 1970).

In one decade, American television had reached great heights. It had developed its technology and skills to a point where it was considered not only a national, but an international institution, one which helped to further the world reach of business whose values and needs television had, in general, reflected. While there had occasionally been dissension through news programs or dramas, they were quieted by economic considerations or blacklisting which had effectively denied access to the media.
for many creative producers, writers and performers during the 1950s. The Kennedy years brought some loosening of those restraints and many artists emerged from obscurity (Barnow, 1970).

In 1963, total television new revenues were over $1.5 billion; CBS had the largest share and overwhelmed the other networks with twelve shows of the first twelve in daylight hours and outdrawing NBC and ABC combined, six programs to four after dark. Advertisers spent $1 million on CBS shows every evening of the year (Oulahan, 1965). A glance at the top rated shows during the 1963/64 season gives a clue to what kind of world was being perceived by the public. It was in this world, that ES/WS had to endure. Of the top ten, eight were comedies, one was entertainment and one was a western. No serious dramatic series had a top rating (Brooks and Marsh, 1979).

1. Beverly Hillbillies 6. The Lucy Show
2. Bonanza 7. Candid Camera
5. Andy Griffin Show 10. My Favorite Martian

Civil Rights Movement and Television

With the increased importance placed on news programs in the early 1960s, broad social problems were brought into the home of the television viewer. During the fall of 1963, just as ES/WS was getting off the ground, several programs dealing with the racial issue were aired. For example, in October, the National Academy of TV Arts and Sciences sponsored a forum on "The Negro in TV." The forum covered employment of Blacks in all of the arts and crafts that go into TV broadcasting and how the medium portrayed Blacks in America. The moderator was David Susskind (The Negro In TV, Radio/Television Daily, 1963). Also in October, CBS aired a four-part experimental drama on "Look Up and Live" depicting the contrasting reactions of several persons to the racial question. The stories were set in a typical medium-sized town where the mayor called for a bi-racial meeting to solve the integration problem (Dowling, 1963). During a three-hour program aired in San Antonio, titled "The American Revolution of 1963," a special on civil rights, NBC was deluged with more than 300 telephone calls, including a bomb threat (Bomb Scare, Radio/Television Daily, 1963).
Neil Brock

Jack Gould, (1963) television critic for the New York Times, commented on the overall image of Blacks on television at the time "... the Negro is represented so seldom that his disenfranchisement has been almost complete." (He acknowledged the exceptions of sports coverage). He suggested that sponsors were hesitant to associate Blacks with their products for fear of incurring the disapproval of retailers or consumers opposed to integration. Through a practice called "sitout", many sponsors simply refused to underwrite programs that used Blacks in any way. This extended to news documentaries as well as entertainment programs. Gould concluded:

... it is a dismaying fact that in the face of the most dramatic moral issues to face the country since the Civil War, there has yet to be so much as a single network drama dealing in compelling terms with the agonies of living outside white democracy.

Some months later, also in the New York Times, there was a piece which reported "impressive results" in the attempt to increase the use of Blacks on TV programs. According to George Fowler, Chair of the New York State Commission of Human Rights, the several gains included: Blacks as residents in the hotel that was the setting for "The Bill Dana Show"; Willis Patterson as King Balthasar in the opera "Amahl and the Night Visitors"; Ossie Davis as a prosecutor in "The Defenders"; and a black bailiff in an installment of "Ben Casey"; Blacks as doctors and nurses in all of TV's shows; Mercedes Ellington joining the all-white June Taylor Dancers on the Jackie Gleason Show; Blacks as students and teachers on "Mr. Novak"; Black baseball players doing razor blade commercials; and a Black actress appearing in a bank commercial (New York Times, 1963). Yet, in a study done by the New York Ethical Culture Society just a few months later, the picture did not look nearly as impressive. They found that "If one viewed television in April, 1964, for five hours, on any channel at any time, he would have seen about three Negroes, two of them for less than a minute and one for a longer period. In only one-fifth of the appearances of the Negro does he receive exposure for more than three minutes" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights).

It was not until the fall of 1963, and the advent of ES/WS that
a black star (Cicely Tyson) played a continuing role in a dramatic series.

Social Work Profession

The social work profession was steadily increasing its ranks in the early 1960s, but there remained a severe shortage of fully trained social workers. They were in such demand that jobs often remained unfilled. A 1962 study showed that immediately after graduation, 96 percent of the June, 1962, graduates were employed. The proportion of men entering the profession continued to grow—from 32 percent of the MSW graduates in 1960 to 42 percent of the MSW graduates in 1962 (NASW News, 1963). Membership in NASW grew more than 66 percent from January, 1956, through January, 1963. By 1963, 37,741 social workers belonged to NASW. By 1964, membership increased to 42,000 members—double its size in 1955 (NASW, 1964).

East Side/West Side

NASW's Beginning Involvement

ES/WS had 26 episodes which aired between September, 1963 and April, 1964. All episodes appeared in re-runs between May, 1964 and September, 1964. (For a summary of each episode, see Appendix). After an extensive search, the author concludes that only three episodes exist on tape: "Age of Consent" (9–30–63); "The $5.98 Dress" (1–13–64); and "Nothing But The Half-truth" (3–30–64). They may be viewed at the Library of Congress. Generally, each script presented a social problem expressed through the plight of a client system. The drama in each program represented an attempt to resolve, to some degree, the problem. The hero, Neil Brock, played a central role in the problem resolution, whether or not the resolution was a success. NASW's involvement began at the very beginning of the project.

In November, 1962, David Susskind attended the New York City Social Work Recruiting Committee and announced his plans to create a television series built around the social work profession. Immediately following, his staff at Talent Associates contacted the NASW national office for information and assistance. This was provided through an orientation to appropriate social work literature, arrangements for contacts and visits to agencies
Neil Brock and social workers in practice, and discussion of story ideas and scripts. For example, on December 28, 1962, Bertram Beck wrote to Audrey Maas and Fred Wartenberg of Talent Associates suggesting that they consider the "Times 100 Neediest Cases" as a source for story ideas. With this letter, he enclosed an article he wrote on public assistance.

Neil Brock

The character, Neil Brock, was the force of the series, first, because George C. Scott played him so strongly, second, because he was developed to be, from the planning stages onward, a strong, no-nonsense, highly capable social worker. A study of the series (and of all the material available on the series) shows that Neil was affected by Bertram Beck, George C. Scott and David Susskind. For a summary of that study, see Andrews (1987). Beck (1981) said, years later that, in retrospect, the character of Brock was modeled after a man named Danny Kronenfeld from Mobilization For Youth. In the August, 1963 issue of NASW News, a memo from Talent Associates to potential writers of scripts indicated what kind of a person Brock was to be. Neil is described as 35 years old (Scott's actual age at the time), a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and the Columbia University School of Social Work. He served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. When he returned from Korea, he visited his old neighborhood, saw that poverty and injustices remained and decided to do something about it. He decided to become a social worker, "a small gesture, he realized, but one that would enable him to sleep nights."

He worked for the New York City Department of Public Welfare for ten years but was fired after he wrote a series of critical articles for a New York newspaper. He was fed up with "bureaucratic inefficiency, the snarl of red tape, and a growing uneasiness with the philosophy of public welfare." He is an angry man, "raging at all the cancers of our society, at all those erosions of the spirit that make good men debase themselves or in other ways deny the soaring possibilities of human existence." The memo suggests that, while Neil could be earning $50,000 a year as a lawyer, doctor, or businessman, he, instead, works as a social worker for $7,700 at the Community Service Agency.
Reactions from social workers to the article were immediate. Almost all of the responses focused on Brock's years at DPW and why he left. For example, one angry social worker suggested that it reinforced the idea that all public welfare is bureaucratic, inefficient and uninterested in helping others to help themselves. She also felt that it gave credence to the myth that a private agency is superior to a public agency (Thurber, 1963). Another wrote that public welfare should not have its problems aired on the series. However, she was “delighted” that the hero was going to be a man (a common theme in many pieces of correspondence) and she felt that this would do a lot to change the public conception of social work. She felt it was wrong for him, however, to be portrayed as unmarried because she would have preferred to have him portrayed as “normal” (Lane, 1963). Another social worker reacted negatively to Brock’s background, “It irritates my rather thin social work skin to learn of the plan to present Mr. Brock’s social (inferior) origins as important to his professional development. What sort of a contribution is this, toward the public image of the social worker?” (Roberts, 1963).

Bertram Beck

In January, 1963, Bertram Beck, Associate Executive Director of NASW, informed all NASW Chairs of Susskind’s interest in producing a show about social workers and requested that they send story ideas to the producer. He warned that no assurances of the quality of the program could be given; yet it would, he suggested, be a “golden chance for the major break-through in gaining public understanding that we have all wanted.” Beck carried the responsibility of consultant to Talent Associates from the beginning through the termination of the relationship. His name, as technical advisor, was listed on the credits of the later programs. He read scripts, made editorial comments and changes, and handled much of the mail from social workers who wrote to NASW about the series. Beck began expressing frustration with the character, Neil Brock, well before the series aired. On March 25, 1963, in a memo from Beck to James Scull, chairman of NASW’s Public Relations Committee, Beck expressed dissatisfaction in the way that Brock was behaving:

When Neil is with a client . . . he must behave in a professional manner, and his responses—each of them—must be those of a
social worker, with certain exceptions which are known to the audience as exceptions. He suggested that perhaps Neil should not be described as a social worker but rather as a volunteer as "This is the way he is behaving."

By May, he directed his frustration at Irving Tunick, story editor at Talent Associates and said, "Neil can, and should be, a passionate social reformer. His anger, however, must be directed at social events that produce people of this sort. He can't be angry at the victims. He must seek to help them."

Thus began a difficult period for Beck, caught between trying to ensure an accurate portrayal of ethical social work practice while maintaining the story to the satisfaction of Talent Associates and, at the same time, being a buffer for angry social work practitioners who demanded that NASW see to it that their view of social work be portrayed.

George C. Scott

George C. Scott, who played Brock, was already a well-known actor in 1963. He worked closely with the writers in developing the social work character and saw the series as dealing with social work on two levels. He said,

first in its conventional and superficial aspect, the hard-put field worker who helps people adjust to society, to get a job, keep their children off the street, find some dignity in living. The second, deeper level, examines and tries to project to viewers the cases as they relate to the vaster, sociological problems of our times (Mc Manus, 1963).

In a TV Guide interview conducted before the first program was aired, Scott admitted,

We've shot our big mouths off about what we're trying to do. If we don't deliver what we've promised, then we're worse than any half-hour situation comedy which doesn't promise anything but entertainment . . . We have got to come to grips with controversial themes. We've got to try to say something about the way we live. I've been just as obnoxious as humanly possible to make my associates see this (Schickel, 1963).

In another interview, Scott suggested that the program would offer a cross section of the kind of people who get into social work, "...—the pseudo intellectuals, the phonies, the society
people and the handful who are sincere and dedicated.” He referred to Brock as
reasonably bright, well educated, who probably could have gone into other more comfortable fields and been successful. To me he’s a champion in worn, blue serge—a man with a sense of humor, but one who realizes the depressing people and problems he deals with daily are a bottomless pit . . . like a hydra-headed monster (Gardella, 1963).

David Susskind

Susskind, as producer of the series, had an enormous impact on the image of Neil Brock and the social work profession. In a long interview which appeared during the time of the series, Susskind clarified his image of the social worker. He said that he was convinced that “in our time and culture and society the social worker is one of the very few evangelists or crusaders . . . they’re underrated, they’re underappreciated and underestimated by the rest of society.” Referring later to social workers as neglected children of modern, urban society, he explained, “He hasn’t got enough status, he hasn’t got enough tools to work with, he hasn’t got enough money to accomplish his ends . . .” (Community, 1964). Susskind admitted that he was aware that a number of social workers were complaining about the way Scott was playing Brock, particularly about his dress (during the entire series, criticism was brought against Scott by social workers who felt their image was tarnished because he did not button his top button and pull his tie up tightly) and about showing anger. He dismissed the former and had this to say about the latter:

Well, perhaps at the social worker college they say, ‘Don’t ever get angry, chaps, out there, keep your temper.’ I think social workers do get angry. I think they have fights with their wives—I think they come to jobs sometimes in a bad mood. I think sometimes they laugh, sometimes they rail against the fates. We are trying to give a dramatic dimension to the social worker. We need a little license.

He felt that if the series did not find universal approval from “The Society of the Social Workers of the World”, they should examine their consciences and decide whether or not it would be better to not have the show. “Would it be better to have such
a show with an immaculate actor who's a bit of a square, a bore . . . or do they want this gutty, exciting, virile, magnetic man to be their prototype?"

Neil Brock, certainly, emerged as a social worker with characteristics of all of his creators and yet managed to portray a high level of social work practice.

A content analysis of a random sample of ten scripts explored the kind of social work portrayed in the series and specifically evaluated the role of Neil Brock (Andrews, 1985). Statements were developed that covered social work practice skills, values, knowledge and roles. Responses from each script were averaged across scripts to obtain a mean score and placed in the categories of low, medium, or high. Interestingly, even though social workers were dissatisfied with the portrayal of the practice of social work, the study showed that the portrayal was that of "good social work practice".

Findings indicated that a high level of professional social work was practiced, particularly in relevant legislative processes, and in the social work goals of caring, curing and changing. Brock functioned at a medium level in providing counseling and in helping communities improve social and health services. Likewise, in the area of values, the portrayal is one of a person who strongly subscribes to social work values. The responses were consistently very high for every value except confidentiality. Because of one script, "Can't Beat The System," the score was low. In this script a recluse whom Brock had helped to re-enter society is left in a position where he could (and does) read the case records of other clients at the agency. Brock's practice was seen as knowledge-based. Brock performed several roles. For example, he related to the power structure in a manner which indicated comparable status. To a medium degree, he practiced radical social work. He was not very interested in rules or regulations. To a high degree, he played the role of an advocate, mediator and broker. He was not a conformist. He practiced generalist social work rather than one specialized kind of activity.

Nonrenewal

Despite good reviews, the series was not renewed for a second season; thus social work's shining hour was short-lived.
Television reviewers/critics appeared to be shocked by the non-renewal. One reviewer questioned whether any serious drama could make it on television. He pointed out that the show dominated its Monday 10:00 P.M. slot, had 35% share of the audience representing about 22 million viewers, and that it had won many awards; yet, all of this could not save the program (Gross, 1964).

Ironically, the show received word of its nonrenewal just before a new format was to be introduced. Starting February 10, 1964, Scott left his social service agency and went to work in the office of a New York congressman. The purpose of this change was to allow the character a much wider scope of activities and to add greater depth and dimension. The controversial nature of the series was to continue, however. George C. Scott and David Susskind were provided the opportunity to debate publicly when Scott appeared on Susskind's "Open End" talk show (Brock, 1964). They discussed what it is like to work on a series and Scott said,

"It isn't acting, David... It is a form of posturing... a form of garbaging lines... you shovel them in and back out... It is shaming. It is making it look as good as you can jolly well make it look with the restrictions and the pressures that are involved."

He referred to "East Side/West Side" as an "ugly and keen experience".

TV reviewer/critics had periodically reported social workers' responses to the series in their columns; and, while their major comments were directed at the acting and the storyline, they had regularly given time to the way social work was being portrayed. In May, 1964, a panel discussion was held at the annual NCSW meeting in Los Angeles at which a critic sat on the panel and later reported the discussion in his column (Smith, 1964). Susskind, who was on the panel, told the group of 5000 social workers, "The program showed the faceless social worker to the American public as a figure of dignity and intelligence and tried to present the problems he faces." Cecil Smith, the writer/critic, added that the program received little support from "the social worker fraternity which kept complaining he [Brock] didn't button his collar." Two social workers were on the panel; one com-
plained that too often Brock "put his hands in his pockets and walked hopelessly away from problems." Another felt that ratings would have been higher if the programs had had more "happy endings . . . a few solutions." Another panel member, Mike Dann, CBS Program Chief, while acknowledging that the ratings were not low, said that the network lost $80,000 each week because it was never fully sponsored. He suggested that sponsors stayed away because ES/WS was a "new type" of program and sponsors do not like to pioneer. It was Cecil Smith who summed up the reasons for the series' demise: "Its very hopelessness, its unrelieved darkness, its repeated theme that there is neither hope nor solution."

The social work profession communicated its role in society via the television screen for a full year (including repeats), satisfying several segments of society and upsetting others. Social work goals were being pursued in an uncertain, changing environment. Social work as a political entity needed to recruit powerful resources and align itself with the dominant groups, but also needed to remain faithful to its humanitarian and democratic ideals. Social workers were not able to do both in this experience. But if the cancellation of the program is illustrative, the "East Side/West Side" project showed the difficulty of openly promoting liberal social values and maintaining sanction from elite sponsors at the time.

Social work has not had an opportunity to match the ES/WS experience. There have been several social workers portrayed in a variety of TV programs, movies, and books in small parts, generally not integral to the plot. These portrayals, however, have often been met with great criticism by social workers. Any attempt to introduce a social worker in a major role has failed. With the huge success of "L.A. Law" (1987/88, renewed), some social workers may well consider the time to be ripe for another attempt at a major social work series. It might do us all well to reflect on this experience of 25 years ago and remind ourselves of how little control we as a profession really had in the project. When ES/WS first came on the air, one T.V. reviewer commented: "... they now join the doctors who don't like Ben Casey, the lawyers who don't like Perry Mason and the psychiatrists who don't like Eleventh Hour or Breaking Point" (Barrett,
Joining forces with the producers and the network by becoming a "consultant" to the series does not assure accurate image-building. When one social worker found out that NASW was consultant for the series, she complained to a T.V. critic who responded:

I agree entirely with your analysis of what "East Side, West Side does to the mass public image of social work. Blanket endorsements of TV series by professional groups have always amazed me. They seem to lend their good name to projects beyond their control as if their good name were worth nothing (Horn, 1963).

We have not forgotten Neil Brock, the impact of his portrayal, nor the conflicts which arose around the portrayal: Happy twenty-fifth birthday, Neil.

References


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David Susskind comments on social problems (Jan./Feb., 1964). Community, NASW Archives.


Lane, B. (1963, September 3). Letter to NASW, NASW Archives.


APPENDIX

"East Side/West Side" includes twenty-six episodes shown between September, 1963, and April, 1964. All were shown as reruns as well between May, 1964, and September, 1964. A brief description of each program is given below.

9–23–63  "The Sinner"
An unwed prostitute provides what is described as a loving and caring home for her infant son; but because, in the eyes of the law, she is not "gainfully employed," the child is taken away from her. Brock attempts to provide her with options and opportunities for change; but because of her "moral standards," she is deemed unfit and the child is placed with the grandmother—a woman who does not care for the child.

9–30–63  "Age of Consent"
This program deals with statutory rape laws. Charges are brought against a young man by the father of a girl who is six months short of 18 years old. It examines hypocrisy of a law which establishes arbitrarily that when a girl becomes 18 she is mature enough to make this decision for herself but that six months before that date she is not. Brock is approached by the young man's parents and works with the young woman and man as they plan their future. The young man is convicted, thus ruining his budding medical career.

10–7–63  "You Can't Beat the System"
Brock persuades a war veteran to leave his room for the first time in ten years. To help the man regain his confidence and to aid him in reestablishing relationships with people, Brock brings him to his agency to do volunteer work under his supervision. Brock is simultaneously working with a young husband who periodically gets drunk and beats his wife. The recluse takes a personal interest in the attractive young wife and finds opportunities to insult the husband when he comes to the agency for help. Through agency files, the recluse finds the young couple's address and goes to their apartment to beat up or kill the husband. Brock intervenes.
10-14-63 "Something for the Girls"

This program is a comedy about a rich spoiled playgirl who is sentenced to work for one month with the agency after accumulating twenty-five traffic tickets. The month sobers her and forces her to examine her values as she comes in contact with people with real problems. She becomes a productive and valuable worker when she organizes a club for the teenage girls of the neighborhood and teaches them sewing and other skills, with Brock supervising and supporting her.

10-21-63 "I Before E"

This segment deals with a dedicated teacher and some undisciplined students. The teacher tries to improve upon the syllabus required by expanding the subject matter, taking the students on trips, including material the students might find enjoyable and interesting. A few students are reached by this method, some remain dubious that they, as Puerto Ricans, will ever have a chance to improve themselves and get decent jobs. After an outburst, the principal wants to expel some students; Neil Brock prevails upon him to give the children another chance. The principal examines his own misgivings and prejudices when trying to evaluate this kind of curriculum.

10-28-63 "No Wings at All"

A shoemaker has a grown son who is mentally retarded. Because he fears for the son's safety, he overprotects the boy, keeping him under very close surveillance and limiting him to very simple routine activities. Brock tries to show the father that he is stifling a human being, that perhaps the son is capable of learning and doing more than the father suspects.

11-4-63 "Who Do You Kill?"

This program deals with a young black family trapped in poverty, suffering from racism, frustration and bitterness. The husband has been unable to find a job or to get into a training program and feels that they will never get out of the slum in which they live. The wife is hopeful about the future—until their baby is fatally bitten by a rat. Neil Brock and Jane Foster are involved with the family and help them through their crisis as well as get involved in a community-based effort to combat the problems of the slum.
11–11–63  "Go Fight City Hall"

Some of the problems of urban renewal are introduced in this program. A grocer and his family and the other tenants of his building are evicted to make way for a school playground. Problems of red tape occur when they try to see who decided on the placement of the playground and whether anything could have been changed. There is also the problem of pulling up roots of several generations and trying to adjust to new neighborhoods, new neighbors and project living. Brock takes up the fight on behalf of the grocer and the tenants in an adjoining brownstone, in an endeavor to alleviate the hardship they would be forced to face.

11–18–63  "Not Bad for Openers"

A cab driver who is a compulsive gambler is the subject of this program. He finds $450 in his cab. Rather than turning it in, he gambles it away. His gambling, and his lack of ethics concerning the $450 add to marital problems with his wife who is frustrated by the accumulation of overdue bills, credit extensions, and lack of funds. Brock meets with the wife and becomes involved with the husband after the husband steals a cab in order to get some cash to gamble.

12–2–63  "No Hiding Place"

This program deals with problems of blockbusting in the suburbs. The neighborhood is upset when a black family moves in. Unscrupulous real estate agents attempt to panic white families into selling at a loss so that they can sell to blacks at inflated prices. Brock is called in to help cool down the situation. Residents do calm down somewhat when they find the black family to be well educated, refined, and realize that property values can stay fixed if people don’t panic. Even a liberal resident who preached this cause becomes worried, though, when the second Black to come into the area is a man who is not college educated and who hasn’t the cultural refinements of the first family. The liberal resident must choose between fighting for what he believes (and possibly losing) and panicking and running with the rest (abandoning his principles).

12–9–63  "Where’s Harry?"

A middle-aged, well-to-do man stops to review his life and finds that his values have been materialistic. He has accumulated a collection of
expensive "things" over the years and finds that he is still miserable. So he runs away one day and goes to the poor slum neighborhood in which he grew up and tries to recapture the values and standards of his father. He rents a room from a young black family who is starting the journey out of the slums and into the suburbs from which he now flees. His wife seeks help from Brock. She is alone and frightened. Brock comes to her assistance and helps mend the couple.

12–16–63  "My Child on Monday Morning"
A friend of Hecky's has an autistic child. The parents have taken the child to many psychiatrists who all recommend that the child needs an institutional setting. The mother, feeling a personal guilt for the child's condition, reacts violently and refuses to allow this and decides that she can provide all the needed help for the child herself. When it is suggested that the mother needs counseling to help her in handling the child, she refuses and withdraws the child from the part-time therapy that Hecky had found for her and which had demonstrated some progress with the child. This leads to a confrontation between mother and father and finally, with some help from Hecky, mother is able to verbalize her fears and agree to counseling.

12–23–63  "Creeps Live Here"
A group of aged semi-recluse 'characters' are about to be evicted from their home to make room for a new supermarket. The house turns out to be a place of great historical value (refuge of Herman Melville, Winslow Homer, etc.) and Brock and the inhabitants fight to save the landmark from the people with purely commercial interests.

1–13–64  "The $5.98 Dress"
A woman on AFDC takes a part-time job in order to help support her family because the welfare checks are inadequate and because her husband, who has a narcotics problem, keeps coming by for money. The welfare department finds out about her job and she is charged with fraud because she failed to report her income. Brock gets involved with the family and attempts to fight the fraud charge. Additionally, he works with the estranged father in hopes of getting him to stop using drugs, and to find employment.

1–20–64  "The Beatnik and the Politician"
An old Italian-American neighborhood finds that many young people, artists, writers, musicians, etc., are moving into their area, attracted
by low rents. The firmly entrenched political boss attempts to bring these people into line so that his district will be problem-free. The young people do not consider themselves an element to be dealt with. The girlfriend of a folk singer is warned by her mother not to associate with the group. In desperation, the mother seeks the help of Brock. Brock gets involved with the young people and ends up encouraging one of the young men to try to beat the boss in a primary fight.

1–27–64 "One Drink at a Time"

This segment deals with 'street people' who roam the Bowery. A woman street person who, for most of her life has lived in the Bowery, appeals to Brock to help her get an apartment so that she can qualify for public assistance. She wants to find a stable place for her long-time boyfriend who drinks wood alcohol. Brock helps her and tries to help the man as well. The woman, after realizing that her man does not want help and does not want to change, chooses to stay with him and live his lifestyle.

2–10–64 "It's War, Man"

A Puerto Rican teenager kills an elderly storekeeper. Brock comes to the youngster's aid, discusses the case with the judge at a preliminary hearing, and then investigates the young man's family life and other factors that motivated the crime. Additionally, the anti-Puerto Rican prejudices of the storekeeper are introduced as a possible factor in motivating the crime.

2–17–64 "Don't Grow Old"

An elderly man is fired from his construction job because of his age even though he is still strong and in good health. Brock tries to get him less taxing jobs but these are very unsatisfactory to the man who has worked in the open air on construction jobs for many years. Finally, the man goes and gets himself a job at the Fulton Fish Market which he enjoys.

2–24–64 "The Street"

A woman's welfare allotment is reduced because her husband is supposed to contribute to the family. The husband, however, has deserted her, and a boyfriend is helping out. Brock gets involved with red tape at the Welfare Department and the Family Court to get help in finding
the husband. No agencies have facilities for tracking down deserters. But the woman is not willing to prosecute her husband, as poor as she is. Brock is able to get her full relief allotment restored by pulling strings with Congressman Hanson. Brock notes that he is only fixing little things on the street, that the real problem is poverty and he, alone, cannot fix that. A subplot deals with Brock's romantic involvement with an actress.

3–2–64 "If your Grandmother had Wheels"
A paraplegic, about to be married, participates in experiments with a doctor. The doctor has developed transistorized electronic devices which, ultimately, will help paraplegics to walk. The man's fear of marriage is very great. His desire to walk is so intense that he uses it as an excuse to postpone his marriage. In trying to help this man, Brock and Congressman Hanson become involved in the problems of obtaining funds for medical research.

3–9–64 "The Passion of the Nickel Player"
Brock finds himself embroiled with the majority of voters in a poor neighborhood. It is hard for them to accept that their nickel-a-day gambling habits are evil or are the cause of political or police corruption.

3–16–64 "Take Sides with the Sun"
Brock receives an offer to work as an aide to Congressman Hanson, which would require quitting his job with the Community Welfare Service. Hanson is convinced that Brock would be an asset on his staff as a legislative consultant on social welfare. An investigation of Brock's background is made and a report is submitted to Hanson and his advisers. Several advisers object to the hiring of Brock, but they are dismissed by Hanson. Brock gets the job.

3–23–64 "The Name of the Game"
This program is about a labor union president and an industrialist who are at loggerheads over the signing of a work contract. A large industrial complex on the drawing boards is jeopardized by the personal drives and antagonism between these two men. Both men are absent at the dedication of a new facility to which Congressman Hanson and Brock are invited. Brock is deputized by the Congressman to try to resolve this confrontation in favor of the public interest.
3–30–64  “Nothing but the Half Truth”

Congressman Hanson, anxious to obtain a larger allocation of Federal aid to combat poverty in his district, asks Brock's assistance in pinpointing the problem. He and Jane Foster, of the Community Welfare Service, conduct a case study of the Valdes family, a typical poverty-stricken family. Brock goes on the David Susskind show (Open End) and discusses poverty with other panelists. Hanson's staff are angry at what Brock says and try to stop the filming of the program. They complain bitterly to Hanson who ends up supporting Brock's position.

4–13–64  “The Givers”

This program is on corruption in Federal contracts, fixed bids and pricing. Brock gets involved when a group wants to make sure that Congressman Hanson doesn't support a bill to clean up the letting of contracts. Brock learns of a couple who went bankrupt after their plastics company could not compete for contracts with a much larger, more influential company. The husband commits suicide and Brock leads a story to the press implicating the influential company.

4–27–64  “Here Today”

Brock tries to convince the Standard, a large newspaper, to run a series on the President's War on Poverty by focusing on Congressman Hanson's district. The Standard turns him down, so he goes to the Light which accepts the series. The small paper's circulation jumps 10,000 as a result. The Standard, seeing the success, goes to another congressman, gets a story from his district, and runs it, charging half the cost the Light is charging. This destroys the Light, and the Standard ends up buying them out.