

## REFLECTIONS ON A PROFESSIONAL'S LIFE AS AN INTERNATIONALIST

### AN INTERVIEW WITH KATHERINE A. KENDALL

*During a distinguished career with the United Nations, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), Dr. Katherine A. Kendall visited, met and consulted with colleagues in nearly 50 countries around the globe. Her work in giving leadership to the international advancement of social work education has been accorded widespread and well deserved recognition. Perhaps the most readily available recognition known to many members of the social work profession is a collection of her articles and addresses conceived as a way of honoring her at the time of her retirement from the IASSW in 1978. The collection appears in a published volume aptly entitled Reflections on Social Work Education - 1950-1978.*

*Dr. Kendall continues to contribute actively her time, thought, energy and inspiration in behalf of the social work profession and social work education, both nationally and internationally.*

#### By James Billups

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In late March, 1996, I interviewed Katherine Kendall in her home just outside of Washington, DC. Pictured at the left are the interviewer and Dr. Kendall during a meeting of the Executive Council of the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, July 1995.

Jim Billups (JB): *We begin at the beginning, as far as your professional career is concerned, what prompted you to take up a career in a helping profession?*

Katherine Kendall (KK): *That's an interesting question because my motivation may have been a bit different from that of many people entering social work. It is a long story, let me begin.*

*The story begins at the University of Illinois in Urbana. That is where I did*

*my undergraduate work in romance languages, history, and philosophy. It was there that I met my future husband, Willmoore Kendall. Only a year older than I, he was already an assistant professor in romance languages while working on his doctorate. He entered Northwestern University at 14 as a boy prodigy and had earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees. He started out as my teacher but he ended up as my fiancée. We traveled in a young, rather Bohemian faculty crowd, more interested in literature and art than in anything political or social. My firm intention was to become a journalist and, especially, a foreign correspondent. And there was the usual sophomore wish to write "The Great American Novel."*

*That all changed when Ken, which is what I called him, won a Rhodes scholarship and spent three years in Oxford. He studied (what is called) "Modern Greats," a combination of economics, political science, philosophy, and, in general, the social sciences. When I finished my degree, I followed him to England.*



Again, we found ourselves involved with an interesting group, young student leftists and some rather special professors, mostly neo-Fabians. Everyone seemed to be left-wing in Oxford in that period of the thirties. You will remember that the thirties also were dominated on the Continent by popular front movements. We were in Paris at the time of Léon Blum and the famous sit-down strikes. Later, after we were married in London, we lived in Madrid where Ken was a foreign correspondent for the United Press—so, he became the foreign correspondent and I tagged along trying to learn all the things he was learning, first at Oxford and then in his work.

We were in Spain before the Civil War and again became very involved, this time with the supporters of the United Front which elected Azaña in 1935. (I believe it was.) We saw this as a triumph of democracy and Ken decided Spain would no longer be very interesting! Also, he wanted to return to academia. An offer of a teaching fellowship from the University of Illinois, which we always associated with a very happy period in our lives, prompted us to leave Spain in 1936. This was just before the Civil War broke out. In fact, we were on the high seas and almost decided to return, particularly after Ken was offered a public relations assignment in the Loyalist government. But we had burned our bridges and had made inviolable commitments to family as well as to the University of Illinois. Our support of the Loyalists got us into a bit of trouble at Illinois and with the Chicago Tribune newspaper.

The point of all this in relation to social work is that the years from 1933 to 1936 constituted a period of total transformation in my thinking and my life. I have never lost interest in literature and the arts, but the social and economic problems, the injustices, and the causes to which I was exposed completely changed my goals. My experiences in Europe colored me not "red" but "pink." I wanted to reform society. It was always understood in our marriage that I would have a career and I knew by 1936 that it had to be something "social." But I had no idea what until I found social work.

JB: *Then what happened? How did you discover social work?*

KK: It took a little while because Ken who was

working on his doctorate in political science had a teaching fellowship that barely kept a graduate student alive. To keep us going, I worked at two part-time jobs, one on the local newspaper and the other as a tutor in a sorority house. The latter was interesting because it was the sorority to which the Dean of Women belonged. She was a very bright woman and it was a source of personal embarrassment that her sorority was pretty much at the bottom of the list academically. She recruited to me spend several hours every night, except Friday and Saturday, as a tutor. I had to keep their noses to the academic grindstone. It worked well enough and I was out of a job at the end of the year.

That was fine because Ken had finished all his work on the doctorate except the dissertation and we moved again—this time to Louisiana. That is rather an interesting story, too, which starts with Huey Long's ambition to make LSU a great university, famous for more than its marching bands. Money was appropriated by the legislature to bring in famous people. They garnered some really outstanding faculty members, such as Cleanth Brooks, one of our great literary critics, and Robert Penn Warren, the famous novelist. Charles Hyneman of the University of Illinois, one of the well-known imports, was recruited to head the Government Department and he brought Ken and me to LSU with him. At last, it was possible to start my career as we had an income on which we could live comfortably. But what should I do? Law had been uppermost in my mind because, as a lawyer, one could certainly attack injustice. But law was not an attractive option in Louisiana where the Napoleonic Code still made it difficult to practice elsewhere.

All my life, I have been lucky, and at LSU I was lucky again. Ken came home after his first day and said: "You know Katherine, they're starting something new here, right in our building. I don't know what it is, but it sounds like what you have been looking for. It is called social work. You had better look into it."

And so I did, the very next day. Louisiana was fortunate in starting pretty much from scratch in establishing its Department of Social Welfare. Relief had been handled by the parishes (counties) under old poor-law provisions which were readily abandoned after the passage of the Social Security Act. A number of first-rate, social workers were

imported to help set up and administer the new department. And one of the first things they asked for was qualified social workers to staff the local offices. This led to the establishment of the social work program at LSU.

I was interviewed by the Director, Runo Arné, a venerable old chap who recently died at the age of 100. He asked me a lot of questions and I asked him a lot of questions. I decided that this, indeed, was what I was looking for. Classes were starting the next day so he decided to let me in immediately. Later, when I was in charge of accreditation at the CSWE, I used to tease them about "buying a pig in a poke." My references weren't checked and I did not make out a searching personal inventory of my strengths, weaknesses, and desires. Just think of what they might have discovered!

JB: *Now you have entered professional education. Is there anything else you would care to share?*

KK: I have mentioned my desires and they did create problems. I must have been a frightful pain because my passion for social action kept me on a soap box all the time. In my view at that time, the real job of the social worker was to put ourselves out of business by changing the social and economic conditions that led to poverty and injustice. All of that I proclaimed until I was placed in field work. When I started working with clients, I discovered there were other things in heaven and earth than the abominations of society. I learned that impoverished human relationships can create every bit as

much misery as inadequate social institutions. So, by the end of the first year, I became really convinced that social work had, and would always have a helping function as well as a social reform function. I decided that we shouldn't go out of business after all. And I am still convinced we can do both. Perhaps only the rare person can function equally well as both a social and individual change agent, but the profession can and should make room for both.

I became even more convinced of this in my first year in practice. As the first qualified social worker in the Baton Rouge Parish Department of Public Welfare. I was given a specialized caseload, hopefully to demonstrate the value of professional education. It was a great responsibility and a marvelous experience which really helped to pin down the course of my professional life. It was a small caseload drawn from all the assistant categories. What the clients had in common was a perceived potential for a return to independence. There was so much that I learned from them about living conditions, about relationships, about what happens to children, about resilience. Most of all about the ability of people to use help and resources if it is there for them. When I hear the discussions now on workfare and welfare reform, I remember that case load. Good social work with adequate resources and sustained professional support on the road to independence is a better answer than any I have yet heard.

JB: *Then, you went on for your doctorate?*

KK: One of my professors, Henry Coe Lanpher, convinced me that I needed to study under Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge at the University of Chicago. There was a question about whether my unaccredited master's degree from LSU would be accepted. The LSU program was accredited only for the first year.

My second year was highly individualized and I was the only student. It was



almost like Oxford, with tutoring in social work subjects along with specialized field work. I took extra courses in the social sciences to fill in what I considered gaps in my earlier education. It was effective because of the personal attention I received.

Edith Abbott did accept me for doctoral study, but it was agreed I should have more field work. Later, I was fortunate enough to serve as one of her research assistants. Being that close to her was another marvelous experience. Working on the doctorate was pretty wonderful throughout. With Sophonisba Breckinridge and Charlotte Towle in the classroom and Lois Wildy as my field instructor in child welfare, I was in clover.

JB: *Could you tell us something about the series of international responsibilities that you have assumed over the years following your doctoral studies?*

KK: I suppose it was in my bones to become international. I was born in the Highlands of Scotland and educated there until the family immigrated to the United States. I was 10 when we came to this country. Being an immigrant, it is perhaps natural that I should feel I belong to more than one country. Then, going back to Europe and living in England, France, and Spain, I felt very much at home overseas. I have always enjoyed getting to know people in other countries and working with them. I also loved the Romance languages which I mastered in the written language. I became somewhat fluent in spoken Spanish, but never quite made it in French.

In Spain I was fascinated that I could go into a shop with a picture from *Vogue* and get an exact copy made of a hat or dress or whatever. I decided it would be fun to learn how to make hats and talked myself into a job as an unpaid apprentice in one of the fancy shops. That was really something. I didn't know much about sewing, but the girls (sic) in the workroom took me on with much amusement as a rather hopeless case. They were right. I may not have learned much about hat making, but I certainly learned a lot of idiomatic Spanish. Best of all was getting to know some of the girls (sic), visiting in their homes and meeting their families.

It was knowledge of Spanish that started my international career. In the forties, the US became involved in exchange programs with Latin America. Actually the first group to come to the US under the

program were social work educators. The Children's Bureau, then in the Department of Labor, set up a special unit to organize their study and travel experiences. Elizabeth Shirley Enoch, who was an extraordinary talented woman, headed the unit. She needed an assistant and Edith Abbott suggested that I might be the right person. So I delayed my doctorate work for an exciting period with the Children's Bureau, working at first with Latin-American social workers and later, after the end of World War II, with social workers from all over the world.

By that time, Ken had gone to Hobart College in upstate New York. This was the beginning of my living in one place and his living in another. Sometimes I tried to follow him and once he tried to follow me, but that didn't work. In time, this was a factor in ending the marriage, but not our friendship.

JB: *When did you go to the United Nations and what of your work there?*

KK: After my experience at the Children's Bureau, it was perhaps inevitable that I should go to the United Nations because one of the first studies they commissioned had to do with the training and exchange of social welfare personnel. I turned it into a survey and analysis of training for social work all around the world.

It was a fabulous experience working at the U. N. in those early days of 1947 as all the programs were shining new and idealistic. We were located at Lake Success in a barn of a building that had produced material for the war effort and now it was peace factory. In that period, people there were so imbued with the promise of the United Nations that there they had no question that the world would eventually, if not soon, be safe from the scourges of war and other evils. In that period, too, the UN. was not bureaucratic to the extent that it became later. Communication flowed easily. I got to know members of the Social Commission and had their help in locating the best people to provide data. I was able to go directly to government agencies and practically everywhere for information. Later, such requests had to go through departments of state or foreign affairs and communication became more difficult. As a result, I got to know, at least by corre-

spondence, leading social work educators in almost all countries where there were schools of social work. Then in 1950, at the first International Congress of Schools of Social Work after the War, I became involved with the IASSW — the International Association of Schools of Social Work.

JB: *Yes, your involvement with the IASSW is certainly well-known. What was your experience?*

KK: The 1950 International Congress of Schools of Social Work was my first Congress but I had been in touch with officers and members of the IASSW in connection with the UN study. It had just been completed and I was invited to keynote the Congress with a report on its findings. It was a frightening experience to stand up before all those important social work educators and I was pretty scared. However, it turned out all right, although the speech itself created something of a flap because I was making the case for university education for social work before an audience of Europeans. Except for the United Kingdom, social work education at the time was conducted under non-university auspices in Europe. It took quite a while for university education to become the norm in some of those countries and in others it is still not accomplished.

At any rate, after the Congress, Dr. René Sand, a very good and great man, tapped me on the shoulder and said: "You are on the Executive Board of the IASSW." (I was elected secretary.) That was how board members were recruited and "elected" in those days! René Sand was one of the greatest people I have ever known. He was truly a Renaissance man. A medical doctor with a social mission, knowledgeable about everything from art and architecture to the furthest reaches of science. He founded the International Conference of Social Work (ICSW) and with others, the IASSW. He initiated social work education in Latin America and was a key figure in WHO and other international organizations. He believed in social work and professional education.

JB: *You began your administrative responsibilities with the IASSW as it's elected secretary. Could you tell us how that came about?*



KK: In a way it was René Sand again. As a member of the Board, I became fascinated by the organization and the people in charge. They were mostly Europeans, and all of them were leaders in social work education. Also, I had decided to take on the IASSW as a cause, not just because of the invitation to keynote the 1950 Congress. Before that, while I was still with the United Nations, I had persuaded Sir Raphael Cimento, the Assistant Secretary General in charge of Social Affairs, to sponsor an expert group meeting of social work leaders to advise the UN. on its social welfare activities. Most of the people invited were already on hand.

This was right after the end of World War II. Both the ICSW and the IASSW were in a state of disintegration and shock. To help them come back to life, the National Conference on Social Welfare sponsored a mini-international conference at the time of its annual conference in Atlantic City. In those days, it was also the custom of graduate

schoolsof social work in the American Association of Schools of Social Work to hold meetings at the time of the National Conference.

René Sand was there as the major representative of the ICSW. As president of the IASSW he was invited to speak at the end of a business session of the American Association. Because of a slip-up of some kind, there were only 6 people in the audience to hear him bring a poignant and beautiful message from "the schools of the old world to the schools of the new world." He was visibly shaken and very angry. He thought the American schools were turning their backs on their international colleagues. I, too was angry, and made a vow that I was going to make American schools aware of the International Association if it was the last thing I ever did. This was a little like my social action days back in my youth. The IASSW became a cause.

JB: *And this has been one of your continuing causes?*

KK: Oh, absolutely, absolutely, without question. Actually, it wasn't long afterwards that the American Association signed up its entire membership as members with the IASSW. I wonder if my becoming Executive Secretary of the American Association had anything to do with that! And I guess I'm still at it.

René Sand died in 1953. The other leaders in Europe were old and tired. Dr. Moltzer of the Netherlands was doing his best as Secretary. He was a dear old chap who knew it was time for a change. He said, "It's not for us now. Younger people have to take over." I had already become involved and was offered the job as President or Secretary. It seemed to me that what they needed most was someone who would do the work so I opted for Secretary. But I had to be sure it was okay with my boss, Ernest Witte, because by that time the Council on Social Work Education had been established. I was the Educational Secretary and Ernest was the Executive Director. How I loved that man. People either loved him or disliked him, but I am sure everyone admired him. He was a hard-driving worker, wonderfully principled with great vision, and almost as compulsive as I am about getting things done — maybe even more compulsive. We saw eye-to-eye on most things, but there were moments of red-hot arguments.

I went to him and said, "This job of Secretary of the International is going to take some time." I was in charge of accreditation, curriculum development, consultation, and all the educational services. We were understaffed and very busy. Ernest said: "All right, you can do it, if you do it on your own time and it doesn't cost us anything. Your own money and your own time." "Okay," I said, "I'll take that"

And it worked out fine, because of all the people who were working with me. That was the joy of it. The new President was Jan de Jongh, Director of the Amsterdam School of Social Work, the oldest school of social work in the world. He was also the Dutch representative on the UN Social Commission. The old guard had a hard time persuading him to take on the job. He finally agreed when he understood he would have the help of a great team. There was Dame Eileen Younghusband of the United Kingdom, one of the greatest of our forebears, who came on as Vice-President. There was Charles "Chick" Hendry of the University of Toronto, another giant in our field, who took over as Treasurer. The team, including myself as Secretary, was elected in 1954 at the second post-War International Congress of Schools of Social Work held in Toronto.

Now it was time for what Dr. Moltzer, the former Secretary, described as "new managers, new laws." We started doing all sorts of new things, some of which our old friends in Europe were a little worried about. Remember we were all volunteers. They wondered how we could possibly manage to run the organization, working across the Atlantic Ocean, that great expanse of water! How were we going to do it with a secretary in the US, a treasurer in Canada, and the others, including most Board members, in Europe. Up to that point, almost everything had been European. We immediately began to involve the developing countries, all the nations that were producing their own leaders. Latin Americans had been somewhat involved, but only peripherally. We got them in up to their necks. That led to the establishment of the Latin American Association of Schools of Social Work. As more and more schools and educators in Africa became involved we helped them create the Association for Social Work Education in Africa. It was in Asia that we probably had our most far reaching influence. Our

family planning project produced the Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education. Those were some of the accomplishments in the years when I was Secretary due without question to the many outstanding people who gave volunteer service to the IASSW.

After Jan de Jongh, Dame Eileen Younghusband served as President for 8 years. She stayed with us as Honorary President until her death in an automobile accident in 1981. For me, it was a tragic personal loss as well as a loss to the field. We had worked together for so long at the UN, the council where she did a special consultation job for us. Then, Herman Stein continued the tradition of great leadership. I had worked with him on countless projects at the Council. He was Council President while I was Executive Director. It was a tremendous joy to work with him as President of the IASSW after I had become its Secretary-General. Finally, the last President with whom I worked was the delightful and wonderfully talented Robin Huws Jones, who was another of the outstanding British educators who were committed internationalists. All those Presidents had much in common. One outstanding feature they shared was a marvelous wit and a sense of humor. How often their light touch and ready wit eased tensions and saved the day when the Board members got tied up in knots.

It will be a nostalgic experience at the Congress in Hong Kong. Herman and Robin will receive the Katherine A. Kendall Award for outstanding international contributions to social work education. I will be there to present it. The ceremony will come at the end of the Eileen Younghusband Lecture that will be given by a dear friend and colleague Sattereh Farman-Farmaian. What an emotional time that will be for me. I hope I survive it.

*JB: Tell us about your international work with the Council. When did you become Executive Director and what was the arrangement with CSWE and with IASSW?*

*KK: I was with the Council from the very beginning in 1952 As Executive Secretary of the American Association of Schools of Social Work (the graduate schools) I was one of the midwives at the birth of the council. Betty Neely, who was the Assistant Secretary of the American Association, and I were*

*the first staff members. My job was Educational Secretary. In 1958, Ernst Witte decided he needed an Associate Executive Director and I was appointed to that position. When Ernest left in 1963, I somewhat reluctantly agreed to serve as Executive Director. I said I would try it for three years as I much preferred working on educational questions. Ernest had done a splendid job of fund raising and administration and I knew it would be difficult for anyone to match his talents in those areas. However, I did enjoy it and was able to keep a hand in the IASSW through the employment of Alix Szilasi as an administrative assistant for international work. She was a life saver with her many languages and exceptional secretarial talents.*

*From the beginning, the Council had a strong international outlook. Ernest Witte had carried out a number of overseas assignments. Mildred Sikkema, who early on had been added to the staff for accreditation and other educational services, was deeply interested in cross-cultural studies. She helped enormously with the IAASW. Betty Neely had close connections with a variety of international organizations. Arnie Pins, who joined me as Associate Executive Director, was also very international. I was not alone by any means.*

*From 1954, I served the IASSW as the elected Secretary. We had completely revamped the By-Laws to introduce some democracy into our operations. There was a clause limiting terms of office to four years with the possibility of reelection for another four years. An exception for the position of Secretary was introduced when my name kept coming up every four years for re-election. It became rather farcical to think of this as an elected office. But that was how it was until 1966 when I had to make a decision.*

*The IASSW Board, looking toward the possibility of an independent Secretarial, changed the elected office of Secretary into a staff position as Secretary General. Jane Hoey had left the IASSW a little money which enabled us to work on plans to raise money. This was the period when President Johnson had declared strong support for international education. The US Congress in 1966 passed, but unfortunately, never funded the International Education Act. John Gardner, one of my favorite people of all time, was Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). He was given authority to admin-*

ister the act, and set up a Center in HEW for that purpose. Money was to be made available to educational institutions and associations. He was a good friend of the Council and all of us saw this as a beacon of hope for financing international activities. The Council Board established a Division of International Education. Universities all across the US. were doing the same thing.

JB: *What happened then?*

KK: I had to make a choice the IASSW wanted me to take over, to the extent possible, as Secretary-General. Of course, there was very little money available for a staff position. At the Council, we had already added (1964) an amendment to the By-Laws to affirm our interest in international cooperation. When the smoke cleared, I had made my choice. I left the post of Executive Director of the Council to become its Director of International Education. It was pretty much understood that I could also serve as Secretary-General of the IASSW. In other words, we split the difference, using whatever resources were available from the IASSW to add to CSWE resources for the new Division of International Education. Herman Stein was President then, and Arnie Pins taking over as the Executive Director, I had strong support for our international work. It didn't last long, but it was great while it lasted.

I left the Council in 1971. With a huge grant from AID and additional support from the Swedish and Canadian counterparts of AID the IASSW set up an independent Secretariat. We remained in New York with the Council. I not only had a full-time job as Secretary-General, I had a staff in this country, and regional representatives in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We recruited educators from the different regions as regional representatives. The funds were given to promote social development and family planning. It was the right moment. Both social development and family planning were emerging as new responsibilities for social work education, particularly in the developing countries. The projects made possible all sorts of good things, seminars, advisory services with consultants drawn from every region, books, and teaching material. It was a great period and lasted until my first retirement in 1978.

JB: *You certainly wore a number of hats with an international emphasis.*

KK: In the US, the international emphasis was very strong in the fifties. That was when many faculty

members had opportunities under UN and UNICEF or with Fulbright grants to go around the world. They came back with a very different attitude toward the international aspects of social work and social work education. They were convinced it was important. That rubbed off on other faculty. Also, the American Association of Social Workers (now NASW) had international committees in a great many chapters that worked with graduate schools on international projects. This was a period of heavy international involvement.

Then, towards the end of the sixties, the international emphasis began to fade because other matters became more important. You'll remember this was the time of student and faculty uprisings. Then, there was the whole new look at minorities and their position in social work and social work education. When I moved into full-time work with the IASSW, the international emphasis was no longer as significant in the American schools. By that time, they had too many other things on their minds.

Some years later, colleagues such as Werner Boehm, another committed internationalist, began agitating for an international committee at the Council. He finally succeeded and international was resuscitated. And now it is alive and well. Now there is a Commission on International Education. Lynne Healy, in her research, discovered what was being done in the schools in the way of comparative study and international courses. She found there were more faculty members interested in international work and content than we had realized. It was a matter of bringing them together. The Commission has done that. We now have symposium



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sessions at the Council's Annual Program Meetings and the newsletter *Inter-Ed*, which has a wide circulation. We have a special initiative with Mexico. And we even have a new IASSW regional association for North America and the Caribbean. Mexico is also involved in both the Latin American and North American Associations.

Everyone talks about our "global village" and indeed that is what we are. What with all the technological developments, we have come closer and closer together. We can get on Internet and talk to colleagues almost anywhere. We can fax letters and documents in the blink of an eye. So, I am really quite optimistic about what is happening at the Council. Of course, there is the usual problem of no money. But there are lots of us who keep it going as volunteers. Don Beless, the Executive Director is wonderful. He is internationally oriented and couldn't be more helpful. Moses Newsome, the current CSWE President, is also strongly international. The future looks good.

JB: Yes, I noticed in a recent Issue of *Inter-Ed* that there was quite a long list of courses on International social work, social welfare, and social development taught in American schools. That seems to be a growing trend. Correct?

KK: To my delight that is correct. There are some significant players. Lynne Healy is in charge of a new Center for International Studies at the University of Connecticut. A Curriculum Resource File at the Center is where the course outlines you mentioned are listed. Terry Hokenstad at Case Western Reserve is deeply engaged in international curriculum development and exchange around the world. Dick Estes, too, is a world-traveled expert, a technological whiz. He is doing a great job at the University of Pennsylvania preparing social workers for employment internationally. Janet Wood Wetzel of Adelphi is in the thick of the women's movement internationally. Mark Lusk at Boise State has had extensive experience in Latin America and right now I think he is in the Republic of Kazakhstan as a World Bank consultant on agricultural reform. Jim Midgley at Louisiana State University (now UC, Berkeley) is internationally known for his scholarly work on

social development. He, along with others, such as Chuck Guzzetta have made great contributions to the professional literature on international social work and social development.

I don't think, however, that we will really have a full resurgence until there are more opportunities for international employment. If international work is available, it can be seen as a career. Then, you know that something will happen in education. Unhappily, most of the international organizations in our field are not well-off. They don't have big payrolls. Also, there is the problem that many of the organizations that should or might use social workers don't know enough about us. Beth Rosenthal discovered that in her doctoral research. International voluntary agencies might employ social workers if they knew more about what we could offer,

JB: This is certainly a major challenge for the profession. But back to you. What would you say are the highlights of your career?

KK: Well, I think my work with the United Nations was certainly one of the highlights. It was important in setting me on course for the rest of my

professional life. At the time, it was important for the profession, particularly for social work beginnings in the developing world. As a result of favorable discussion of the report on training for social work, the Social Commission sent a significant resolution to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly where it was adopted in 1950. I can show you the resolution and it might be interesting to copy out the important part which put social work on the map, so to speak. Here it is:

*... That social work should in principle be a professional function performed by men and women who have received professional training by taking a formal course of social work theory and practice in an appropriate educational institution... and that these courses, whether provided in universities or special schools, should be of the highest possible quality and should be sufficiently comprehensive to do justice to both the variety and the unity of social work. (United Nations, Social Commission Report 1950: 3).*



This was the United Nations calling for social work education. Well, social work in the newly independent nations took off like a rocket. The important phrase was that social work, in principle, should be "a professional function performed by men and women who received professional training. You see, that, in effect, established social work as a profession whose practitioners had to have special preparation. That had not been thought of much before in the work of the United Nations. So, in providing social welfare advisory services, the UN gave high priority to training programs. That meant starting schools of social work or improving any schools of social work that already existed. UN and UNISEF programs also included international and regional seminars, expert groups, and fellowships as well as technical assistance. The IASSW was a partner in all those activities. We were called upon to chair or participate in all the seminars and expert groups. We recommended educators for the

technical assistance activities. In general, we worked hand in glove with the Social Affairs staff at the Secretariat. At that time, many of them were highly qualified social workers.

The study did have quite an impact in the beginning. It analyzed what existed at the time and set forth recommendations for future action. I guess it could be rated as an accomplishment. But it is one I have forgotten and everyone else has forgotten by this time. Now that we are talking about it, I do remember particularly having a great time with a collection of definitions of social work. They came in from quite a few countries. They ranged all the way from social work as alms-giving in Saudi Arabia to the advanced professional services of the US and the UK.

As an exercise, I played around with the international definition of "health" in the constitution of the World Health Organization. It was amazing. With a few word changes, it could have been a definition of social welfare, broadly conceived. Alva Myrdal, who was at that time the head of the Department of Social Affairs, loved it. But there was no way we could use it as an international definition of social work. It would have been great for social development but our data simply could not support it.

The Social Commission members at that time were mostly ministers or heads of social welfare programs in their countries. It was lucky they were so well-disposed toward professional training. The Commission asked for a follow-up report at two-year intervals. One of the follow-up studies was the third international survey of social work training. Eileen Younghusband did that one. It was much more significant than the first one because it got into the nuts and bolts of professional education. For many years it served as the Bible for curriculum building in new schools in the developing world. Much of what she defined as the core still holds true. I believe there were five studies before the Social Commission and Economic and Social Council became less and less social and more and more economic in their resolutions and activities. Today, there is very little evidence of interest in social work or social work education.

JB: *I see that this study, Training for Social Work: An International Survey, was published by the United*

## HELPING

CHARLOTTE TOWLE on Social  
Work and Social Casework

Edited and with an Introduction by  
HELEN HARRIS PERLMAN



*Nations Department of Social Affairs In 1950. Didn't it later become the basis of your doctoral dissertation'?*

KK: Actually, in effect, this was it. Helen Wright, the Dean of the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, was my advisor. We talked about the study as a possible dissertation before I took it on. She wondered whether there would be enough depth and analysis to make it viable as a dissertation and kept that question open. We worked together on the questionnaires and I made frequent trips to the University for her guidance. You see, there was nobody at the U. N. in the Department of Social Affairs who could work with me on this. Very few of them knew much about social work or social work education or research. As the data piled up and as the study took shape, it was obvious that all the requirements for analysis, depth, creativity, etc. could be met.

I don't want to go on and on about the study. But it was such a great experience that now we have started, I remember so many things. The New York School (Columbia now) placed a foreign student with me for field work. She was Swiss and practically lived with me throughout much of her second year. Our methods were pretty primitive. Everything had to be sorted by country and, then, by the different subject areas. We had all these little piles of information about the individual schools and about social work. When we ran out of space on desks, we sorted on the floor. Then, when we ran out of space at the office, we sorted on the floor of my apartment in Great Neck. There was no clerical help to speak of, so I did most of the typing. Most of the material was in English, French, or Spanish with a little in German. My student knew German as well as French. Between us, we could handle translation of the data. The translation of the questionnaires and the final translations of the report were done by professionals at the UN. And thereby hangs another tale.

When the questionnaires were sent to the translation service, I asked for a Russian version. That could be done only if authorized by the USSR delegate to the Social Commission. I buttonholed him, told him about the study, and asked for his help. He would have none of it. He said the USSR didn't need social work because there was no poverty. Also, he was sure that what came out of the study

would be US propaganda. Well, I answered that he knew more than I did because I wouldn't know what would come out of the study until I had the data. If he wanted to outdo the US., he should be sure that the USSR point of view was represented. For that, we had to have answers to the questionnaire. Well, he agreed to talk to me in my office, but only for 30 minutes.

I had pictures of three of my Godchildren on my desk. When he came, he looked at them and asked if they were my children. I said, "No, they are my Godchildren." He looked puzzled and asked: "What are Godchildren?" I explained as best I could and then asked if he had children. Yes, he did and they lived in Brooklyn. We talked about his children and how they were doing at school, etc. Then, I asked about children in the USSR. Were they ever abused, neglected, abandoned, etc.? Most countries had problems like that. Yes, the children in Russia sometimes had problems. Then, I asked how they were handled and learned about the special cadres to take care of such things. And did they have special training? Yes, they did. Well, we went through the whole range of Charlotte Towel's common human needs and problems — all, that is, except poverty which I carefully avoided. The upshot was that they did have ways of dealing with social problems but, as you would guess, they were not the ways of the West. He stayed for almost an hour and agreed to have the questionnaire translated and sent to Moscow. That was the last I heard of it. Although it was foolish to think there would be a reply from the bureaucracy in Moscow. It was a disappointment. One good thing that came out of it was my realization that there are many different ways of sharing experiences. Even when there may be great differences in the approach and handling of problems, there is much that we can find in common. I always like to look for universals.

JB: *Let's look now at some of your personal challenges. What are the greatest you have encountered?*

KK: Of course, we are constantly being challenged in social work. That seems to go with the territory. It was hard for me to juggle both jobs, the Council and the International Association. I have hinted that I am somewhat compulsive and I had to do right by both of them— So, it did mean long hours. It also

meant I always used week-ends and vacations for IASSW business. As Ernest said: On my own time and with my own money. Actually, I did take time away from the Council for some of my international activities and Ernest was always very good about it. Almost all the trips I took, hundreds and hundreds of them, I had to do on my own money and the only money I had came from my salary. But then, I don't live expensively so that didn't matter too much. I'd rather spend money trotting around the world than buying a house or automobiles. Time was perhaps more of a problem. I did a lot of writing at the Council — reports and policy statements. Also a lot of traveling in the US. as a consultant. On the plus side, I had wonderful help. I was blessed with first-rate secretaries and, as the years passed, a great many dedicated IASSW volunteers. I suppose the challenge was to get enough people interested so that they would become committed. That was certainly one of the most satisfying aspects of my work with the IASSW. There were so many committed colleagues in Europe, in Latin America, in Asia and, of course, in the U.S. and Canada. I can't begin to name them all. We didn't have as many in Africa, but Yvonne Asamoah, who was then in Ghana and now heads the CSWE International Commission, was one of our best.

JB: *Have you noticed that some professionals in social work today will hardly go to the next city, much less to a more distant place, unless they are paid?*

KK: Yes, we used to have much more volunteer activity than I think we do now. In fact, some of my colleagues tell me I set a very bad example in not expecting payment for all the volunteer work I do. I guess I feel the need to "pay back" what has been given to me in my career. There have been so many opportunities. I really wish there was more of a sense of giving instead of always expecting to receive. This may be something in our field that we should look at. As social workers, we do a lot of asking for support for the people we serve and the causes we believe in. Perhaps, on social work salaries, we can't be philanthropists, but I would like to see ourselves as givers as well as beneficiaries of financial help. There are lots of benefits in working as a volunteer at something you believe in. And in the long run, believe me, the benefits in friendships

and missions achieved are better than money.

JB: *Were there other personal challenges you recall?*

KK: Yes, there are indeed. One of the major challenges, particularly at the beginning, was to make the IASSW truly an international organization. It was called the International Committee of Schools of Social Work until 1954. It had started in Europe and, not surprisingly, remained pretty much European until after World War II. Europe was where the international action was in social work education. Belgium, France, Switzerland, Holland, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries dominated the scene.

Before the Nazi period in Germany, the schools there played an important role. Alice Salomon, one of the founders of the IASSW and the first President and Secretary, came from Berlin. I must tell you about her. She has been called the Jane Addams of Germany. Her family had lived in Germany for many years. When it was discovered that she was Jewish, she was expelled in 1937 by the Gestapo. She became a refugee and it broke her. She had always had a red carpet welcome wherever she had gone. As an exile, her life was very different. Many people tried to help her, but the adjustment was too difficult. In 1948, she died a lonely death in the United States. Fortunately, her truly remarkable contributions are now being brought to light in research by German social work educators, notably Joachim Wieler. That was a detour but I had to say something about Alice Salomon. We don't pay enough attention to the contributions of our pioneers.

To get back to the challenge, parts of the world other than Europe were represented in the IASSW, but only peripherally. There were some Canadians and a few from the United States. Also one or two from Chile and Brazil where Rene' Sand had so much influence. We worked awfully hard to identify schools and individuals and get them involved. The UN study helped. All the schools that had been identified and the leaders who had contributed data became interested in continuing some connection with international colleagues. The new schools that were being established were eager to join an international organization. So, it took a little time, but it wasn't too long before the membership

increased by leaps and bounds. This made it possible to hold our Congresses in parts of the world we had not been before, not just the Western world. And now, of course, the influence of the West is no greater than the influence of any other part of the world. In fact, it may be less.

There were other challenges, too. The ongoing challenge that all social welfare and social work organizations face is the challenge of finding money to do the job. It's not at all ennobling to be poor. It is a pain. And it keeps us from doing what really needs to be done. The IASSW has done remarkably well in helping the countries in Eastern Europe develop programs of social work education, but it could do a lot more if we had assured financial support as we did in the seventies.

Perhaps I should just mention that there have also been physical challenges. I sometimes describe myself as a bionic woman with ersatz ears, corneal transplants, and a rearranged interior. In my early twenties, I learned that I was losing my hearing. Fortunately, hearing aids took care of that and again I was lucky. I had excellent bone conduction so the aid I used the rest of my professional life was tucked away behind my ear. Very few People knew I used one. Now, I flaunt hearing aids in both ears just like most of the old folks here where I live. For a brief period I was legally blind, but corneal transplants came to the rescue. Finally, I had the good luck of having stomach cancer discovered early. I lost the stomach but survived with no great continuing problem. These were all challenges of a sort which were inconvenient although not in any way a hindrance except when I wanted to go overseas during the War. I was with the Red Cross, but couldn't pass the physical exam. Thanks to modern medicine and my Scottish genes, I am in good health and am what you might call "well preserved."

JB: *And indeed You are. Now that you have reviewed some of your accomplishments and challenges, have you ever experienced failures in your career? Maybe that's too strong a term. Let me put it this way. Has there been anything you would have done differently?*

KK: Well, I didn't do very well in Madrid as an apprentice milliner and I was hopeless as an aspiring dressmaker! Those were absolute failures, but fun. I guess you are more interested in my life as a

social worker. There are lots of things I wish I had done differently, but there is one area in which I failed.

At one time, I thought that the real answer for social work education consisted of producing graduates who were first well educated and then well qualified through professional preparation. It was my idea to put together the social studies they had in Britain before it changed and the graduate training we had in the US before it changed. In other words, I wanted our undergraduate education to achieve what the British saw as social work education. This was a broad social science curriculum with a lot on economics and political and social theory together with some social work subjects and practical training. There was a professor in Britain by the name of Roger Wilson who once said something I have never forgotten. I can only paraphrase it. He said that social workers get such a bellyful of life in working with people that they have to know a tremendous amount about society, economics, politics, etc., in addition to what they know about people and how to help them. It seemed to me that building on such a base would prepare students to make good use of the more rigorous social work preparation that characterized our graduate programs in the US. I did speak and write about this a bit and tried to include some of the ideas in the first guide to social welfare content for undergraduate education that I put together at the Council. Our undergraduate programs do some of what I had in mind, but not nearly enough.

Of course, there were other things I wish I had done differently. I wish I had been more aggressive about some things and sometimes I wish I had been less aggressive. It is hard to find a happy medium. There was evidently a suspicion at one point that those of us who worked so enthusiastically for the IASSW were a tight little international group. I don't think that was true, but we must have given that impression. And you can see from my frequent references to certain people that we were close. Jan de Jongh and Eileen Younghusband and Herman Stein and Robin Huws Jones all happened to be the Presidents of the IASSW during my tenure as Secretary. We were friends as well as colleagues and did spend a lot of time together

There may have been a perception that we were too Western-oriented. Again, I don't think that

was the case. In fact, I think we were rather good, as I have perhaps indicated, in making an almost exclusive European organization into a broadly international one. We did more than most Western educators I know in encouraging indigenous curriculum development. I think the schools with which we worked in non-western societies would agree. But one can't be defensive about these things. You have to do your best and you can never please everybody.

JB: *With respect to colleagues around the world who are members of the social professions, what are the issues that you think are likely to deserve, if not demand, increasing amounts of their time, thought, and energy in the immediate years ahead?*

KK: This is a time of great crisis for the people we serve and for the profession. In the social professions — whatever they are called — we face a strong backward movement. We see it even in Scandinavia. I've just come back from Stockholm. Of course, they are still way ahead as a welfare state. But there too, they are rethinking their "safety nets." It is a question of the bottom line. They can no longer do all that has been done before. They have to restructure. We have to restructure in this country. Canada is questioning what they can afford. One could go on and on in the same vein for one country after another. And where does social work fit in all this restructuring?

Before we get too pessimistic, let us remember there is one place where social work is a bright and shining discovery. In the countries of Eastern Europe, programs of social work education are flourishing. I'll never forget a letter I received from one of the Hungarians who attended an IASSW seminar in this country and then became qualified as a social worker in Australia. He wrote: "Social work is wonderful!" He was so full of enthusiasm with this new way of helping people. He is now one of the leaders in social work education in Hungary.

*I understand the reasons why so many social workers have forsaken the public social services and found a safer and more comfortable life in therapeutic and private practice. I'm sorry to see it happen. We have lots of introspection in our field but it has been related more to ourselves than to the purpose of social work in society and the world. We are not here to serve ourselves or our narrow special interests. We are here to serve our own society and others in the global village in a particular way.*

So what about our future? We have to start looking at ourselves, examining what we teach. This is a different world from the one in which many of us have functioned as practitioners and educators. The Great Depression and the New Deal gave us our first big chance to make a difference. You found social workers in leadership roles in all the public services. Then we were out front in the war against poverty in the period of the Great Society. It was the same on the international front. After World War II when the UN began promoting social welfare services and sending advisors to all the new nations, the results were seen in their constitutions. Some sort of social welfare provision was always included because that was what one

needed to do to be a decent country. You had to look after people. Some of the developing nations are now going backwards, just like so many of the countries in the industrialized world. Yet, we have that upsurge of interest and support of social work in the new democratic nations - going in another direction. Isn't that interesting?

What should we make of all this in social work? Where do we go from here? I think we must do a lot more thinking

about community, not in the sense of community organization, but rather community renewal. We need to work with others in developing the forces and the resources in the community that will help us recoup and get back the feeling that ours is a compassionate, not a vindictive society. My hero, John Gardner, is working on this in a movement called Alliance for National Renewal which is gathering significant support across the country. We don't know yet whether the Republicans will succeed in putting back on the states all responsibility for the poor, but if they do we will need to do what we can to make it as constructive as possible for the people we serve. But let's hope we don't have to face that dilemma.

We do need, however, to get into a period of self-examination and relate it to the new economic and political structure. If the Democrats get back



into power, we can save much of what we value in the social field. I would still hope, however, that we would look critically at what needs to be done differently. A new century is almost upon us and new ways of dealing with social problems are needed. I don't have answers but I do think that whatever we do in social work has to be more community, internationally, and globally oriented. And this would certainly have implications for social work education.

JB: *The IASSW, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the ICSW, and the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development IUCISDS have organized their international conferences around themes of social development and socioeconomic development for a number of years now.*

KK: Well, yes, social development is not ours alone, of course. Social development involves other disciplines as well as social work. One of the new ways of doing things would be to become more interdisciplinary in social work education. We have become too insular and I worry a lot about private practice and how that affects the curriculum. If private practice is the major purpose and end result of our professional preparation, I am not sure that we are doing the job that social work was created to do. We were born out of a need to help everyone have a reasonably decent standard of living, a decent life with dignity. Remember what dear Franklin

Roosevelt proclaimed. No one should be ill-fed or ill-housed. (Oh, the wonderful things he said and did.) Look at the nation today and the world around us. So many people are hungry and homeless. I know we are working on such issues but it isn't as obvious as it should be that social workers are the front-line troops in battling the reasons for so much misery.

I understand the reasons why so many social workers have forsaken the public social services and found a safer and more comfortable life in therapeutic and private practice. I'm sorry to see it happen. We have lots of introspection in our field but it has been related more to ourselves than to the purpose of social work in society and the world. We are not here to serve ourselves or our narrow special interests. We are here to serve our own society and others in the global village in a particular way.

When I talk about finding new ways, there is a caveat. What happened in Latin America is a lesson of sorts. They looked at what they were doing and didn't like it — it was too much like the US. and didn't fit. In Brazil, they did a very nice job of restructuring their programs. They called it "reconceptualization." Then, some Marxists from Germany with deep pockets entered the scene and underwrote a movement from reconceptualization into what might be called "manning the barricades." I visited Chile soon after the new wave and found posters everywhere in the schools of social work proclaiming that "if you are not with the oppressed you are an oppressor." In Uruguay, there was even a suggestion that students in field work should learn how to use guns in order to be ready for revolutionary action. Now, the pendulum has swung back and the schools, while still deeply involved in changing what they call the "social reality," have found a better balance. This is one of the interesting questions to think about in working with the Eastern European countries. What sort of balance will they find in their new situation?

One of the good things that came out of the all this radical activity was the idea of conscientization— Paulo Freire's work was very important in finding new ways of working with poor people in the community and helping them to empower themselves more effectively. Conscientization became quite well-known, not only in Latin America but in other parts of the world as

well.

JB: *Again back to you, as an active supporter and advocate for several national and international social welfare-related organizations, what are some of your current activities?*

KK: I'm still very much involved with the international work of the Council on Social Work Education and, also, with the IASSW. They both had the bad judgment to make me an honorary life member of their respective boards of directors. That means I attend all the meetings. So, I expect to totter in at the age of 98 and in a quavering voice say, "Now, this is how we used to do it in the olden days. We tried that and it didn't work." So far, everyone has been very kind and patient, I participate in the IASSW Congresses. At each one since my first retirement, I have said: "This is it. This is the last one." Then, I keep turning up, mostly because I have heard that this old friend or that old friend will be making a speech or it is a country or city I love and want to see again. I should say it is because of my great interest in the subject matter, but I'm afraid that now it is more an interest in meeting old friends from other countries and, to some extent, learning a little about what is going on. Perhaps I shouldn't admit to my frivolous motives, but it's the truth. But I do help out in any way I can, now that the IASSW is once again managed by the officers and volunteers. The Secretariat in Vienna had to be closed because of financial difficulties. Fortunately, Ralph Garber, the current President, and the other officers are doing a splendid job in putting the IASSW back on the track.

At the Council, I am pretty active with the Commission on International Social Work Education. I also handle all their equivalency determination inquiries and that is a fairly big job. We seem to have had an influx of foreign-trained social workers, particularly from India, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Many other countries are also represented. Their educational backgrounds have to be reviewed by the Council and equated to our BSW or MSW or rejected altogether. I have help from educators across the country who are knowledgeable about social work education here at home and in one or another country as well. It's a tough job and I often feel I may be making the wrong call.

It is not that I think a social worker is a social worker is a social worker no matter where or what. Rather, I know how remarkably capable and competent many foreign-trained social workers are because I have worked with them. They come from many different educational systems and there is no way we can make exact comparisons. I am often conflicted. In the end, however, certain standards must be maintained.

JB: *I understand there is not only a currency to your activities but also an interest in preserving the historical record.*

KK: Yes, I sometimes think my major role these days is serving as the institutional memory for both the Council and the IASSW. For some time I have been working on a history of the first 20 years of the Council. It is a dull history. The purpose is to pin down and document the facts with little reference to all the interesting people who were associated with the Council. Perhaps that is why I can't seem to stay with it. Well over 50 percent is finished and I must do the rest before I am finished.

The other historical record is the IASSW archive at the University of Minnesota. That is where we have what is probably the major social welfare collection in the country. I sent all the IASSW material from 1929 to 1978 to Minnesota when I retired and the Secretariat moved to Vienna, Austria. With the Vienna office closed, the material from Austria has been shipped to Minnesota. It arrived in scores of cartons and David Klaassen, the Curator, must have thought, "Good Heavens, what am I going to do with all this stuff and how does it ever get integrated with what we already have." Whether he said that or not, I don't know, but he was very relieved when I offered to help, I have been there twice, spending a week each time, sorting it out. It is now in good enough shape that they can integrate it with the previous lot. What a fascinating archive it is. I wish I were years younger so that I could write a history of the IASSW. I hope some ambitious young scholar will do just that-

JB: *Among your many interests, I recall that at the time of the International Conference on Social Welfare in Calgary, you took part of one day to visit a site of dinosaur bones. Another day, you were off to the Canadian*



*Rockies to explore glaciers. Then, Don Beless has reminded me of your interests in gardening, books, the arts (including culinary arts), and high diving. Do you have a philosophy of life that involves you in so many diverse activities?*

KK: Yes, oh yes, you must live life to the full, absolutely. What's the use of living unless you enjoy everything that is available to you. I have been so *lucky* in everything. I have a wonderful immediate family, an equally wonderful extended family including very special Godchildren. We are all very close and see each other often. I've never had a job, except one, that I didn't love. And, then, I've met so many great people, in every continent. And on top of that I have seen some wonderful things. You can imagine that in traveling around the world my eyes have been constantly dazzled by its wonders. I've managed always to mix a little pleasure with business. Or should I say that I have mixed business with pleasure.

Now, you mentioned Calgary. Did I attend any meetings? Yes, I did, but I also had to see those superb mountains and that magnificent dinosaur museum. So, yes, you have to have a certain joy in living. Otherwise, it would be too ordinary.

I took to cooking early in my married life. I couldn't cook anything when I got married and Ken's friends at Oxford knew that. One of them gave me just the right cookbook as a wedding present. It was called *Recipes of All Nations* by Countess Morphy, evidently a much-traveled woman. It was just right because it wasn't too precise and left room to add a little of this or that. You had to measure some things, but you could experiment and that made it interesting, more like a creative art than a chore. Ken liked to cook, too, and every night we tried a recipe from a different country. There were hilarious failures and notable successes. That is how I learned to cook and in my later travels, I picked up lots of recipes. So, that is how I came to cook in different languages and it was fun.

Gardening I have just discovered since moving to this retirement community. I have always lived in apartments or places where it was not possible to have a garden. One of my Godchildren is a master gardener and she is a good teacher. I still very often mistake a weed for a flower or vice-versa, but I am improving. Thanks to Andrea, my

Godchild, the garden is beautiful.

As to my athletic ability, that isn't even worth mentioning. I happened to be very fond of swimming and diving in my young days. I was particularly fond of diving. It was such a great feeling to fly up and out in the air on a swan dive and go in to the water nice and clean. That was lovely. I was pretty good at it, especially *the swan* dive. I wasn't as good at the others, but I tried them all. When we were in Spain, there was a national competition. Only three women turned up for the diving event and all three of us were foreigners. That was hardly a competition. I was the winner because of my swan dive. My picture appeared in the paper in Madrid so, I can prove that it happened. Otherwise, I wouldn't believe it myself. It is really nothing to boast about.

JB: *And your interest in books and reading?*

KK: That started very early. My mother and relatives in Scotland used to say, "The poor child is going to ruin her eyesight. She always has her eyes in a book." They could have been right as we had no electricity and it was either candies or a kerosene lamp. As I said, I started early. I read every night. In fact, I can't go to sleep without reading. Biographies and current histories are my favorites except when I travel. Then I want good mystery stories. With novels, I get stuck on certain authors and have to read everything they have ever written. I have just finished rereading all of Jane Austen and I am sure I enjoyed her more now than before.

JB: *Visiting with you this weekend, I see you have an active social life as well.*

KK: Yes, I get teased as the Pearl Mesta of social work. I like to get to know people outside of conference rooms. As Secretary of the IASSW, I served as their non-governmental representative at the UN and UNICEF. Asking people home for a drink and dinner made it possible to explore all sorts of things that helped to make cooperative work easier. Also, I liked to have Board members at the Council get to know each other, especially when there were new members. So, the first night of a Board meeting, I would have them come to my house for cocktails. It may have made a difference. I don't know, but

anyway I liked doing it. And any time international friends came to New York, there had to be a party. That made it easier for them to meet colleagues and other friends of mine.

Another social activity of sorts that was great fun was putting on skits at the Council's Annual Program Meetings. Herman Stein and I collaborated on that. The first one was probably the best one. An interview with Leo Perlis was featured in the *New York Times*. He was with the CIO and on the Council Board as a citizen representative. In those days, we had lay Board members as well as members from other disciplines. I wish that were true now. He thought highly of social work education and was quoted as saying, "Bartenders see more people in trouble than anyone else. They ought to be trained in social work." Recruitment was a priority at that time so in our skit we sent a bevy of eminent deans in full academic regalia to a bar to research whether the bartender was a good bet for social work. It was amazing how many deans had good singing voices. You would probably know the names of most of them. I remember that Wayne Vasey was the bartender. We also had barflies — people like Katherine Oettinger, Chief of the Children's Bureau, and other social bigwigs from Washington — pouring out their troubles and getting help from the bartender. The deans decided to take a chance on admitting the bartender but he needed a scholarship. Milton Wittman, who was distributing NIMH grants rather generously at that time, was called in to do the necessary. He was a wonderful ham and had a great voice. The songs made fun of issues we were working on at the time, such as the generic program. It was satire but mild, and social work always emerged triumphant. Every year, we put on a new skit and involved as many deans and others as we could. There were some really star performances. We stopped writing skits when everyone became so tied up with protests and social work had lost its sense of humor. All the skits are in the social welfare archives at the University of Minnesota.

JB: *You did a lot of serious writing as well on social work and social work education. Fifteen of your articles and addresses were published under the title Reflections on Social Work Education. This Interview Is appearing in a journal entitled Reflections. I would be remiss if I did not ask, as one of my final questions, whether there are any current reflections you care to share?*

KK: When we think of social work historically, we can see that it has had its ups and downs. There have been times when we have been highly valued and times when we have not been highly valued. I fear we have entered a period when we are not highly valued. It is very important that we continue to value ourselves, what we know and what we do, and try to overcome the obstacles in our way. I do wonder why it is that we don't have more influence, particularly when it comes to discussions on welfare reform. Is it because so many of us are Democrats who probably would have little influence with the Republicans? However, there must be a few Republicans in our field who know something.

I can't help thinking about the time when social work did make a difference. Under Roosevelt, and, later, the public social services were often run and were certainly well-staffed by social workers. During the War and afterwards, when UNRRA and then the United Nations and UNICEF came along, social workers were everywhere. They were the ones who headed social missions, rescued children, helped refugees and others whose lives had been shattered by the War. Maybe we come into our own only if there is a great tragedy or enormous dislocation. I hope it doesn't take disasters to give us a place in the sun. But it does seem to me we are not used as much as we once were and should be now. Of course, the social and political climate is not in our favor. Also, I am sure I don't know as much as I should about all the ways in which we are being

used to the hilt. Perhaps I suffer from that annoying ailment of old folks who are always claiming that it was better in the good old days!

JB: *Perhaps you are right that the social*

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**"TO THE PURE ALL THINGS ARE PURE"**

(*Puris omnia pura*)

—*Arab Proverb*

*work profession, much like adolescents, has the attribute of responding best to a crisis. If there is a flood disaster or some other emergency, adolescent youth often respond very effectively if given the opportunity. But they aren't ordinarily prized by the larger community for what they can do. Could it be that social work is still in its adolescence?*

KK: Except that we are a little old to be adolescent. I think we went through that stage in the late thirties and in the forties when we began to see where we fit into all the programs coming out of New Deal legislation. One of the problems we have had all along and still have is this dichotomy between social change and individual change. I think we need the capability of carrying both functions. The need is to make room for both. That need is seen in other countries as well where the question arises, "Which is to be paramount?"

Again and again, we hear criticism of the American influence on social work and social work education as professional imperialism. This bothers me. Not all, but most of the people who go on about this don't know what they are talking about. First, let's talk about American casework, the usual whipping boy. Casework made a significant difference after World War II. Social work in many European countries was quite bureaucratically organized. Social workers were agents, all right, but agents of the government or the church or of some particular group such as a trade union. They were rather paternalistic, doing things for people or to them. Then, American casework came along and European educators fell upon it with whole-hearted enthusiasm. They took it over because they wanted it. They saw that understanding and working with people in dynamic terms was a more democratic way of helping and a better kind of social work. There was much collegial exchange. It would be hard to find an imperialistic motivation on the part of the Americans or subservience on the part of the Europeans.

Later, when social casework became the favored methodology in programs established in Asia and Africa, a problem did arise. The many differences in social systems, in cultural factors, and in personal relationships were probably not taken into account as well as they should have been. Americans serving as consultants were blamed as profes-

sional imperialists. But a large part of the problem was the perception by so many countries and individuals in the immediate postwar period that everything American was wonderful. If what the US had was the best in social work education, that was what new countries wanted. Why settle for less? The fellows brought to the US. on UN. scholarships sat at the feet of Gordon Hamilton and Cora Kasius and learned a lot. When they went home, they carried with them what they had learned, perhaps too often as gospel. And in their teaching they wanted to share what they had learned. There weren't any seasoned social work elders to help them translate the new learning into what was best for their situation. American consultants were also the products of their professional preparation. Some of them may not have seen beyond their own course outlines when they were assigned to teach in another country. There is something in the criticism, but why call it imperialism? There may have been a few Americans who went as dedicated missionaries to make the world safe for American casework. I did not run across them and I don't think that was what happened.

We need to be a little more knowledgeable and a little more understanding not only about what actually happened, but about the context in which the teaching and learning took place. I take a much more lenient view than some of my good friends and colleagues about some of the less fortunate results of overseas missions. Also, I don't like the idea of blaming people or blaming countries. We should be more careful in our judgments on international matters.

Another thing that bothers me a bit is extreme nationalism and provincialism also, sometimes, regionalism. I want international solidarity. Of course, we must build on the local, national, and regional, but too often social workers get stuck on their own narrow vision of the world. They think it is enough to worry about what happens in this country and don't care too much about what happens in other countries and regions. I see a lot of that in the US. I suppose it is understandable, considering the severity of the problems we face at home. Yet, I keep hoping for more give and take, so that we can appreciate the whole while working in our particular part of the world or on our special interest. I don't suppose we will ever manage to act as equal hu-

man beings everywhere, with no country being better than another and no superpower. But we can get together as an international profession in a variety of ways. With all the cultural differences, we have many goals in common throughout the world. We may have different conceptions of the role of social work, but you can't get away from the fact that there are common human needs and common human and social problems. That is why I cherish international solidarity so that we can work together on our common goals and learn from our differences. That happens at the IASSW International Congresses. I have seen many a conversion as participants from different countries get to know one another. They decide that their world is not the only world and there are other worlds worth exploring.

International experiences also produce new ideas. Some form of social development, in which you have such a strong interest, is one such idea. This started way back in the fifties. First it was known as community development. Then it was rural development. Then, it became developmental social welfare. The UN and UNISEF were probably the most instrumental in getting the idea of social development into social work. It has been talked about and written up in reports and now it is being explored in scholarly publications, but we still haven't quite discovered how to make it clearer as one of the objectives of social work education.

This brings us again to interdisciplinary collaboration as social development will never be ours alone. We may be missing the boat a bit by not having more to do with other disciplines working in this area. There are some colleagues who are active on this. David Cox of Australia, for example, is one of them. Your own Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development is a chief proponent of this approach as well. The IASSW has just published a new directory of some 1500 programs called social work or "social something." Now, we have to find or discover what is social work and what are the "social somethings." Social development is in there somewhere as there is definitely a resurgence of interest in it as a field of practice for social workers.

JB: *Finally, with regard to this resurgence, is there anything more you wish to say about social development as a concept, a goal, a process and approach to social work?*

KK: I can give you an example. If you have not read *Daughter of Persia* by Sattareh Farman-Farmaian, you must do so. She is going to give the Dame Eileen Younghusband Lecture on "Social Work as Social Development" at our next International Congress this coming July in Hong Kong. She was marked for execution in Iran because of her western ideas and aristocratic background. Her life was spared when the Mullah, who was second in command to Komenei, said: "You can't kill this woman. She has done too much for the poor of Iran, but she will have to leave the country." She now lives in the US.

What she started as social work in Iran was a form of social development. She didn't call it that. In fact, she had to invent a name in Persian for social work. She started social work education from scratch. She recruited both men and women as students. One of the first things she did was personally take them out into the field to show them the problems and the situations they would meet as social workers. They then figured out how best to deal with what they had seen. There is an amazing story of how they got the mayor to go to a terrible municipal facility where the inmates were literally mired in feces — and how they got all that changed, doing a lot of the cleaning up work themselves.

Satte, as she is called, early on established community welfare centers to provide services to women. There were literacy classes, day care for children, and training in all sorts of skills to help them live better. She found a way of getting the men involved. She saw that birth control was urgently needed and started an underground service. But she wanted to start regular clinics. She exposed the Shah's wife in the same way she exposed her students to the conditions that needed to be changed. The Queen was appalled by the effect of constant child-bearing on poverty-stricken women and their babies. She wanted something done about it so Satte said to her, "Go home and tell your husband that this country needs family planning." She did and the Shah gave permission for the establishment of family planning clinics. That led to the organization of a Family Planning Association to establish clinics throughout Iran. Satte also directed it as well as the School. There may be some elements of social development that are not found in

this story, but, in my view, her combination of social reform and social work adds up to social development, it is a fabulous book. It ought to be in the library of every school of social work and used by faculty and students.

JB: *Do you have any final words for us?*

KK: Perhaps we could end this interesting experience with a few words about what it is like to live here at Collington which is a life care community. It was quite a change to move from the middle of Manhattan to what seemed like the middle of nowhere on the edge of Washington DC. As I watched my friends struggle with failing health in their retirement years, I decided to look into life care communities. This one had everything I was looking for. The location is ideal as I have always liked Washington. We are a few minutes by car from the Metro and at the same station as the Metro I can catch an Amtrak train to New York. Everything is new and, as you can see, it is very attractive. You also have discovered that we have gourmet food.

Best of all are the people who have come here. I sometimes think it is the next to the last resting place for many of the old New Dealers, who ran the government for so many years. Next in numbers are probably foreign service officers, including a handful of ambassadors. Then, there are the academics, professionals of all varieties, and an assortment from the military services. There are rather more couples than one usually finds in a place like this. And most everyone seems to have lived or visited in countries all around the world. I once said there is enough brain power and talent here to run a small country. That brain power and talent are put to use in ways that make life here not only interesting but challenging. And, most important, health care is available to the end should I need it. I am glad I made the move from the middle of Manhattan to the middle of nowhere. □

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