



The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 12
Issue 2 June

Article 3

May 1985

Ideology and Opportunity in Social Work During the New Deal Years

Norma Kolko Phillips
City University of New York

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>

 Part of the [Social Policy Commons](#), [Social Welfare Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Phillips, Norma Kolko (1985) "Ideology and Opportunity in Social Work During the New Deal Years," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 2 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol12/iss2/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.



IDEOLOGY AND OPPORTUNITY IN SOCIAL WORK DURING
THE NEW DEAL YEARS

Norma Kolko Phillips, D.S.W., Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology and Social Work
Herbert H. Lehman College, City University of New York

ABSTRACT

As the country moved from a dominant ideology of voluntarism towards the welfare state during the New Deal years, conflicts and compromises occurred within the social work profession that required a definition of the role the profession would assume with relation to the public sector of social welfare. The nature of the relationship that evolved between social work and government, and the accommodations made by each during the New Deal years, and particularly around the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, are examined.

INTRODUCTION

The failure of market mechanisms to provide employment and opportunities for economic self-sufficiency for all "able-bodied" people was a major component in the social unrest of the Great Depression and produced critical changes in attitudes of the Federal government towards public and private rights and responsibilities. With the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, the Federal government made its first commitment to permanent involvement with social welfare problems, bringing the social work profession and the Federal government together in a long-term mutual concern for social welfare. This new sponsorship of social welfare programs put the Federal government in the position to offer social work an expansion of professional jurisdiction, including opportunities for jobs. It was at this juncture that the profession had to define its priorities and make clear its position in relation to federal policy and

it was here that social work ideologies were formulated through intense professional conflict and compromise.¹ This paper will explore the nature of the relationship which developed between social work and the Federal government around the New Deal social welfare programs, culminating in the Social Security Act of 1935. This relationship has been crucial to the determination of the scope, direction, values, and goals of social work during the past fifty years, and is again challenged in the debates sparked by Reagan administration policy. The following questions will be addressed:

1. What were the conflicts and compromises within the profession during the New Deal years and what accommodations were made in relation to the Federal government?
2. What influence did the profession have on public policy?
3. Which values were lost, and which were gained as social work accepted the partnership with the Federal government; how did this influence the direction of the profession?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SOCIAL WORK - GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP

Throughout American history one sees a pattern of slow and uneven movement toward expanded federal involvement in social welfare. These shifts, in turn, created changing roles for social work after the professions's birth at the beginning of the 20th century. Although the tradition of the English Poor Law, brought to this country by the earliest settlers, introduced the principle of government involvement with social welfare, it kept minimal the responsibility that the government assumed for meeting the needs of the poor in the New World. Government tended to follow the ideology of privatism, which can be defined as individual rather than societal responsibility for creating, experiencing, and alleviating poverty. Privatism continued as the dominant ideology until the 1920s. Only in times of crises, when social and political systems were threatened, did the government extend its role in alleviating social welfare

problems, as, for example in the formation of the Freedmen's Bureau in the Civil War period (Olds, 1963). The belief that poverty was associated with immorality and individual failure rather than with the nature of the economic system was founded on the American myth that opportunities existed for economic success, and the individual was responsible for his own economic distress. During the late 19th century, while privatism was dominant, social work developed in divergent directions represented by the Charity Organization Societies and the Settlement House movement, with the former assuming individual responsibility, and the latter societal responsibility for the causes of poverty and its solutions.

During the 1920s, when the United States had seen the dramatic economic and social changes brought about by industrialization and increased corporate power, privatism was challenged and voluntarism, advocated by Herbert Hoover during that decade, took hold as the dominant ideology in the country. Based on the assumption that poverty was a result of the structure of the economic system rather than individual moral failure, voluntarism represented a significant shift from the earlier thinking. Along with this new understanding of the causes of poverty came a broader view of the responsibilities of the society to provide opportunities for people (Hoover, 1922). Although the Federal government was in no way seen as a provider of income or social services, it was seen as the protector of citizens and to this end government intervened by encouraging the development of cooperative institutions, including trade associations, professional societies, and organizations of farmers and laborers (Hawley, 1974; 117-118; Burner, 1979). The 1920s also saw the development of welfare capitalism in America, another form of voluntarism, based on the premise of mutuality of interests between labor and management (Brandes, 1970: 26-28).

Hoover's applications of voluntarism as a solution to massive suffering linked social work and government during the early years of the Great Depression. He maintained that if self-reliance and self-respect were to survive, private charity and local government rather than the Federal government

must assume responsibility for funding and administering social welfare programs. At this point in history the Federal government and the society as a whole turned to social work agencies to take on responsibility for distributing relief funds. By 1931, as mass need increased, more and more people were turning to social workers in family agencies for financial help.

STRUGGLES WITHIN SOCIAL WORK DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE DEPRESSION

The first winter of the Great Depression saw social work sharing with many other groups the belief that the economy would soon improve (Bruno, 1957: 300-301).² In spite of the increase in unemployment that began with the economic disaster of 1929, it was not until 1931 that the Proceedings of the National Conference on Charities and Corrections reflect the concern of social workers about widespread unemployment. During the early 1930s, as the severity of the economic and social conditions was becoming apparent to more and more social workers, the process of re-establishing the historical connection between the social work profession and the task of relieving poverty began.

Consequently, two major conflicts arose within the profession. First, in response to public pressure, social work reluctantly downgraded the importance of the counseling function which had been highly valued by family agencies during the 1920s and began the shift to assuming the function of relieving poverty once again. In addition, the profession struggled with the question of Federal government responsibility for relief. In the early Depression years, only some social workers supported federal grants to states for unemployment relief. Others continued to see local government and local charities as the appropriate sources for relief.³ As economic conditions continued to worsen, social work became more unified in its position, supporting federal responsibility for providing relief and advocating more strongly for work relief. In an article in the Survey in April 1931, Mary van Kleeck, of the Department of Industrial Studies of the Russell Sage Foundation and an outspoken social work leader,

criticized President Hoover's veto of the Wagner bill, which called for a national employment service. At its annual meeting that year, the American Association of Social Workers (AASW) appointed a Committee on Unemployment to collect information on unemployment from local chapters and publicize it, to consider unemployment insurance and more adequate funding of relief, and to further consider federal funding of relief.⁴

Although more and more social workers supported Federal government intervention in social welfare policy and programs, it was by no means the dominant attitude within the profession and it was not until 1932, three years into the Depression, that AASW gave its support to the Costigan-LaFollette bill providing for federal grants to the states for unemployment relief, thereby officially endorsing the principle of federal responsibility for this program (Fisher, 1980: 39-40).⁵

A group of radical social workers organized what became known as the Rank-and-File movement in 1931. They believed the Depression was the result of a breakdown in the old economic order and that only the replacement of the old social order with one based on public ownership of resources of the nation, and a planned and rational use of these resources would bring it to an end. The movement opposed the political position of the social work establishment which, it claimed, was committed to the preservation of the status quo and was deferential to the conservative views of businessmen who assumed positions of leadership in social work agencies. Although most people in the movement were not Communist Party members, their disillusionment with Hoover's policies and with the ability of social work leaders to propose plans to meet the needs of the unemployed, led to what Jacob Fisher referred to as a "fascination" with Communist thinking. In addition to discussions of social problems and participation in political activities, the Rank-and-File movement sponsored a journal, Social Work Today, which provided a forum for voices of reform thought during the critical years of 1932-1942 (see Fisher, 1980: 91-100).

SOCIAL WORK AND THE PROMISE OF RECOVERY AT
THE PRICE OF REFORM

In February 1934, a year after Franklin D. Roosevelt took office, the first AASW Delegate Conference, also referred to as the Conference on Governmental Objectives for Social Work, met for the purpose of integrating the work of government on all levels with that of social work.⁶ Both the AASW establishment and the radical faction were heard, the former advocating recovery of the economy and the latter urging reform of capitalism.⁷

Speaking at the 1934 meeting was Harry Hopkins, who headed the New Deal Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and who previously had headed Roosevelt's Temporary Emergency Relief Administration in New York State. Also a social worker, Hopkins appealed to AASW to support current governmental actions. Hopkins identified Roosevelt's goals with those of social work, focusing on the President's interest in increasing the degree of planning in the economy and his desire to create a structure to provide security for the unemployed, the elderly, and handicapped.⁸

At the same conference, Harry Lurie, of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research, represented the radical social work position that the intention of the New Deal was not change but recovery--"restoration of our present industrial and agricultural system so that it might function again as it did in the reign of Mr. Roosevelt's predecessors." He interpreted Roosevelt's cuts of the emergency welfare programs of the New Deal as surrendering to the pressures from industry which feared that permanent programs would challenge the private ownership system. Lurie encouraged social workers to take a stand in opposition to the President and to urge the formation of programs designed to alter the distribution of wealth (Delegate Conference, 1934: 240-253).

Although the recommendations of the 1934 Delegate Conference were aimed at influencing federal policy in the direction of more substantial relief programs, they did not support the major policy revisions urged by Harry Lurie. For example, the Conference endorsed the Wagner-Lewis bill, which would have established

state systems of unemployment insurance providing seven dollars a week for a maximum of ten weeks, rather than the more liberal Lundeen bill, which would have provided compensation to the unemployed on a level equal to the average local wage for similar work. The Conference's recommendation was that minimum benefits and the period of compensation under the Wagner-Lewis bill be increased.

In her address, "Our Illusions Regarding Government," delivered at the 1934 National Conference of Social Work, Mary van Kleeck criticized the 1934 Delegate Conference, saying that the social work professional association "had committed itself to identification with the present administration, to endorsement of . . . its principles." Van Kleeck urged social workers to surrender their "illusions regarding government" as representing all the people and to recognize that "government tends to protect property rights rather than human rights." She claimed that by failing to approach poverty as a consequence of the economic system, the government avoided making basic changes in the economic system. She encouraged social workers to give up their nonpartisan position, pointing out that failure to make commitments to principles can result in a defense of the status quo. Van Kleeck suggested that social workers refuse positions in public social welfare agencies if the positions required that they serve as apologists of the government (Proceedings, 1934: 474-484).⁹

FERA'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL WORK EXPANSION

In spite of this warning, by 1934 social work was already heavily involved in the new government relief programs. FERA's decision that public funds should be administered by nonpartisan public officials marked the start of the expansion of the public sector of social work, bringing with it a vast enlargement in the jurisdiction of the profession. FERA was able to spend large sums of money to employ as many social workers as could be found. Social workers were hired to work on all levels, ranging from investigators to administrators of FERA's Social Service Division, implementing the government's programs and interpreting them to the community. Hopkins had said, "I want

at least one competent social worker in every district office in America'" (Kurzman, 1974: 174-176). Paul Kurzman has stated of this remark, "and thus in one sentence, the die surely had been cast. All over the country, where there never had been a sign of a social worker before, social workers suddenly appeared" (Kurzman, 1974: 174). The demand created a growth spurt for social work education as well, and early in 1934, Hopkins earmarked funds from FERA for states to send their relief workers to accredited graduate schools of social work, strengthening the professional base of social work. Between 1930 and 1940 the number of professional social workers almost doubled (Kurzman, 1974: 175).¹⁰

Although futile in its efforts to retain FERA, the profession did speak out in unison against Roosevelt's announcement in his State-of-the-Union address that "the Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief" in the beginning of 1935. FERA was to be terminated and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) created as an alternative work relief program. It was anticipated by the Roosevelt administration that the categorical aid program of the proposed Social Security bill would meet the needs of the aged, the blind, and of dependent children needing relief, and Roosevelt proposed that total responsibility for relief for those not covered by WPA or the social security programs be returned to states and localities. Although AASW welcomed the categorical aid programs, it feared that some states would not have sufficient resources, administrative tools, or in some cases even the necessary legislation to take on responsibility for the needy who fell between WPA and the categorical assistance provisions of the proposed social security program. AASW considered it essential that a general relief or general assistance title be added to the proposed social security bill to provide for families who fell between WPA and the categorical assistance programs.¹¹ At stake, as well, were the self-interests of the profession, which had benefited from its involvement in the administration of FERA (Compass, 1935: 3-6; see Fisher, 1980: 58-59).

In many chapters of AASW, protest meetings were held and telegrams sent to President Roosevelt

opposing the termination of federal grants for public assistance. The executive secretary of AASW, Walter West, sent a telegram to Roosevelt urging the continuation of federal grants to states. The Division on Government and Social Work of AASW suggested, and the executive committee of the association accepted, the recommendation to adopt a resolution calling on the Federal government to resume its responsibility for providing grants to states for general assistance. According to this recommendation, such a plan would be administered by the newly appointed Social Security Board (Fisher, 1980: 62).

FAILURE TO CHALLENGE THE PROVISIONS OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

Although two social workers, Frances Perkins and Harry Hopkins, were highly influential in formulating the Social Security Act, their activities cannot be viewed as representative of the participation of the social work profession in the accomplishment of that legislation.¹² To the contrary, the profession was both distracted and torn by various factions and was unable to function effectively as a pressure group to influence it.¹³ In addition, social work was absorbed by the issue of the withdrawal of FERA funds during 1935 and consequently debate within the profession about the Social Security Act, both in its planning stages and after its passage in August 1935, was scarce (see a non-evaluative article, Bond, 1935: 7-10).

During that year, the Compass emphasized professional issues related to the introduction of the public sector in social work, such as the establishment of professional standards, analyses of membership in AASW, education for social work, and the question of the relationship of public relief workers to the profession. Even before the Social Security Act was passed the radical group of social workers also had turned its interests towards professional issues rather than issues of social welfare policy. Few articles appeared in Social Work Today challenging the various controversial aspects of the Social Security bill.¹⁴ Both journals featured articles concerning the professional standing of public relief workers and

the role of social work in public welfare programs. In addition, Social Work Today addressed the issue of labor unions for social workers--a movement which the radical group initiated.

The AASW Delegate Conference in 1935 was devoted to the various controversial aspects of the Economic Security program, later renamed the Social Security Act. Opinions of the members in this group varied widely. Most of the speakers at the Conference prefaced their suggestions for change with recognition and admiration for the advances the bill symbolized. Others were clear in their support for the President's program and declined to suggest changes (Delegate Conference, 1935: 149-50, 235-236). Radical social workers, including Mary van Kleeck, took a position in support of the provisions of the Lundeen bill as the preferred plan for unemployment insurance. Linton Swift of the Family Welfare Association of America advocated putting pressure on the Federal government for change. He warned that if an economic system cannot meet the test of providing an adequate working income to all classes of the population, then "we must develop a different system. It becomes a question in the minds of many of us as to when you apply that test" (Delegate Conference, 1935: 19-20).

The Conference could not resolve differences and no recommendations for changes in the Economic Security bill were made (Delegate Conference, 1935: 22-23). Bertha Reynolds commented on this lack of participation in her article, "Whom do Social Workers Serve?" which appeared in Social Work Today in May 1935. Reynolds said:

For a social worker to deny that there is a class struggle today is to confess to an ignorance of what is going on so appalling that it amounts to a confession of unwillingness to know. As the opportunities to know beat more insistently upon our ears each day, such unwillingness comes more and more to mean participation on the side of maintaining privilege and exploitation, with all its frightful toll of human life (1935: 5-7,34).

EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL WORK

In its final form, the Social Security Act of 1935 was a legislative compromise responsive to the complexities of the economic and political conditions of the Great Depression. As with most compromises, it was the result of pressures from special interest groups representing conflicting values. A fundamental objective was the restoration of confidence in the Roosevelt administration and in the existing economic and social system.

Legitimized by the Supreme Court in May 1937 through the *Helvering v. Davis* decision, the Social Security Act signified the Federal government's commitment to responsibility for the general welfare (*Helvering v. Davis*, 1937). With this decision, the Court established a legal basis for the ideology of the welfare state. This critical decision has been described as altering "the future course of social welfare in the United States" (Pumphrey and Pumphrey, 1961: 433).

From the point of view of social work, the social insurances and the public assistance and child welfare titles of the new legislation provided additional opportunities for professional growth by expanding the area of influence of the profession and making permanent the new job opportunities and demands for increased education. The 1930 census counted 31,000 "social welfare workers" while there were 70,000 in 1940. The increase of 117% was greater than that of any other professional group during this period.¹⁵ It is estimated, however, that there were actually 150,000 people employed in social work in 1939 in either a professional or semiprofessional capacity.¹⁶ With this rapid expansion of employment opportunities and lack of qualified people to fill the new positions, seventeen new schools of social work were established during the decade, bringing the total to forty (Fisher, 1980: 235).

Changes were required in social work as well as the government as both joined in common tasks. In addition to the need to further define the social work-government relationship, social work was presented with complex tasks, such as redefining the function of private agencies, coordinating the roles

of public and private agencies, assimilating public welfare agencies and their social work staffs into the profession, determining the extent of the involvement of the profession in the public sector of social welfare, and clarifying the role that the profession would officially assume in social action. Conflicts and opportunities emerged as social workers debated these issues (see for example Swift, 1936: 282-283, 350; Swift, 1937: 10; Hodson, 1938: 33; Belsley, 1936: 9-10; Klein, 1936: 5-7).¹⁷

During the years following passage of the Social Security Act, social work continued its concern with federal legislation. AASW made recommendations for expansion of a federal work program and a non-categorical public assistance program, and the radical social work group as well continued to pressure for liberalization of the Social Security Act.

However, within a few years attention turned from ideology to optimizing opportunities for social work. By 1940, AASW had abandoned its demand for a general assistance title under the Social Security Act or for the alternative plan of a comprehensive public assistance title for all needy people and gave wholehearted support to the administration's social welfare programs. Social Work Today became increasingly involved in discussion of unionism for social workers at the expense of working towards legislative changes. The American Public Welfare Association, which in 1936 had advocated that a general assistance title be included in the Social Security Act, also went along with the administration. The organization's director, Frank Bane, was selected to be executive director of the Social Security Board, and that organization and the Federal government became "partners in a common enterprise" (Fisher, 1980: 179-180). For the mainstream of the profession the struggle--the cause--was over and it addressed itself instead to the details of the new problems centering around implementation and professionalization that were introduced by the passage of the Social Security Act. Social work reconciled itself to the social welfare programs of the administration, supported them, and accepted the opportunities it was offered.

CONCLUSIONS: CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE IN SOCIAL WORK IDEOLOGY

The Social Security Act of 1935, signifying the movement from voluntarism to the introduction of the welfare state in this country, marks that point of qualitative change when, finally, there could be no retreat from the assumption of federal responsibility for "the general welfare." By the time the Act was passed the Depression was into its sixth year. The pervasiveness and severity of the Depression extended beyond previous economic crises. The severity and extent of social distress disputed the viability of privatism and voluntarism; it both required and enabled approaches towards resolution that were beyond the scope of what previously had been done in the area of social welfare in this country. With the passage of the Social Security Act and its hearings in the Supreme Court, the new conception of government's responsibility for the general welfare was broadened, legitimized, and made permanent, paving the way for additional legislation and further development toward the welfare state.

Growing out of its own history, social work was a natural "partner" with government as these changes occurred. This growing involvement of social work with government dovetailed with the process of professionalization. As the institution of social welfare gained complexity, so did the tasks of the social work profession. Herbert Hoover had linked social work and government during the early years of the Great Depression in his request that social workers assume the task of raising and distributing charitable funds. This assignment of relief-giving functions was carried on by Roosevelt. In this latter period, as the profession became involved in the public as well as the private sector of social welfare, these functions became institutionalized.

Social workers were firmly entrenched in the public relief system by the time the Social Security Act was proposed, and continued to work in the administration and delivery of the public assistance titles of the new legislation. The question of how to satisfy both the occupational and the professional aspects of the profession arose for social work in the 1930s and has continued until today.

When the New Deal programs began, social work was well on its way to achieving the status of a profession including a commitment to community interest and an ethical system. It functioned as both a political interest and pressure group, and insofar as it aimed to improve its own status, it also met the criteria of an occupational interest and pressure group. Armand Mauss has pointed out that political and occupational interests may overlap (1975: 12-15). Conflicts arose within the social work profession in the 1930s as the functions of pressuring for political change and striving to expand professional jurisdiction at times worked against each other. It was at this juncture that a price had to be paid by the social work profession, either in ideology or in opportunity.

The choice was determined by the needs of the profession for sanction. M. S. Larson has pointed out that a profession's values and goals will be acceptable and sanctioned by society only if they appeal to the values of the dominant ideology. The quest for sanction and power, which ultimately derives from a profession's connections with government, precludes persistent and serious challenges to government policies (1977: 157-158, 226).

Conflict arises for a profession-occupation which, insofar as it is a profession, is responsible to act in the interest of clients, including political action, and insofar as it is an occupation, needs to protect occupational self interests, including advancement of status. The moderate position that AASW assumed in relation to government policy and legislation during the New Deal years best fits the model of the occupational interest group.

The concept of feedback as a professional function, as discussed by Louis Levitt, bridges the functions of the social work profession and the institution of social welfare:

The two concepts are reciprocal, each intertwined with the other in a constantly interacting relationship, each influencing the other. The institution's constant unfolding of newly legitimated social needs evokes new services as the profession feeds back to society its continuing discovery of the patterning of social hurt emanating from its practice experience. (1980: 637)

Viewing the function of feedback as a cornerstone to the relationship between the social work profession and the institution of social welfare also introduces balance between the preservation of occupational interests and the maximization of professional objectives.

As social work grew in numbers and influence, it became a critical force in advancing social welfare activities involving government interest and funding. As an organized entity the profession did not advocate radical reform but both social work and government accommodated to each other. This stance has required an integration of the concepts of cause and function in the profession. Harold Lewis has suggested that it is the dynamic relationship between cause and function that shapes service. He defines service "as the evolving form and substance of the unity and conflict of cause in function, necessitating the constant addressing of both sides of this conflict if positive social change is to be achieved" (1977: 24).

The recent challenges to social welfare programs in this country reflect renewed and increased conflict between the values of the dominant society and social work. Attitudes in the society and the social work profession are shifting and roles are redefined as voluntarism and privatism are reawakened. We can reflect back to Bertha Reynolds, writing in 1936, "There will never be money enough for relief while the richest country in the world places the burden of taxation so disproportionately, not where there is ability to pay but where there is inability to protest" (1936: 12). Once again the profession must confront the obsolete ideologies of privatism and voluntarism as they again are called upon by the Reagan administration. Now, too, the profession must determine how it will move to sustain permanent Federal government involvement in promotion of the general welfare.

NOTES

¹Theodorson and Theodorson have stated that when the term "ideology" was introduced at the beginning of the 19th century, it referred to the study of ideas. However, it soon took on its present meaning of "a set of ideas justifying particular interests" (1969: 195).

²Samuel Eliot Morison wrote of the 1929 crash, "No nation ever faced a business decline more optimistically than America did this one. Nobody highly placed in government or finance admitted the existence of a depression for six months or more after the crash" (The Oxford History of the American People, Vol. 3, 1972: 291).

³However, later in 1930, statements were made by the Executive Committee of the American Association of Social Workers to the effect that the resources of government and industry, rather than philanthropy and voluntarism, would be necessary to cope with the national emergency (see Fisher, 1980: 34-35). During the same year, Linton Swift, Executive Secretary of the Family Welfare Association, urged that a greater proportion of relief should be publicly funded (Chambers, 1963: 192).

⁴For example, the settlement workers, who favored federal aid to state and local governments for relief, took initiative by stimulating and guiding social protest and moved toward direct political action. In 1931, the Unemployed Committee of the National Federation of Settlements published the widely-read Case Studies of Unemployment, describing 150 cases in which unemployment was seen as a result of industrial rather than individual causes, and which stressed the human cost of unemployment. Around the same time, articles urging social workers to look more closely at the social insurances began to appear in the Compass. Unemployment insurance in the U.S., which was in the form of the dole, was contrasted to the social insurances provided in Europe (Fisher, 1980: 35, 39-40).

⁵Concerning work relief, the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor sponsored a privately supported work relief project as early as 1930 (Chambers, pp. 194-195). The American Association of Public Welfare Officials refused to take a stand on the issue of federal grants to states for unemployment relief (Fisher, 1980: 42-43).

⁶The "Proceedings" of the American Association of Social Workers referred to in this paper are located in the Library of the National Association of Social Workers in Washington, D.C.

⁷Shortly after the 1934 AASW Delegate Conference, Social Service Review reported of the Conference:

In its early days there was danger that the Association might be too much like a narrow kind of trade union. . . . The Washington meeting, in many ways, constitutes a landmark in our professional history. In a time of national crisis, the delegates of the Association accepted their responsibility in regard to national planning and the necessity of formulating clearly the governmental objectives in social welfare. There is assurance that clear thinking to formulate policies that are in the interests of the poor clients whose case and cause we represent and courage to defend those policies should be a part of the new tradition that is in the making. (1934: 145-146)

⁸President Roosevelt was quoted in 1934 as saying, "Social workers and I have the same objectives in common--social justice for everyone" (Compass, 1934: 6).

⁹Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in his book, The Age Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval reported a spectator at van Kleeck's address at the 1934 National Conference as saying, "'Never in a long experience of conferences has this observer witnessed such a prolonged ovation'" (1960: 194).

¹⁰The efforts of Sophonisba Breckinridge, the president of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, ensured that the training of personnel for FERA was carried out in accredited professional schools with aid from federally funded scholarships, rather than in brief training courses for emergency relief workers. Edith Abbott, then dean of the School of Social Service Administration at the University of

Chicago, noted that not only were standards maintained, but because of publicity of the new opportunities in public welfare, of which college graduates had not been previously well informed, and because of lack of other employment opportunities, requirements for admission were actually raised (Costin, 1983: 227-228).

¹¹Social work reformers were concerned that WPA assistance, unemployment compensation, and old age pension were all tied to work, with no federal aid for the millions of able-bodied unemployed who were also dependent on relief (Bremer, 1984: 166-167).

¹²Hopkins and Perkins both made important and controversial recommendations to the President during the process of formulating the Social Security program. Hopkins suggested to Roosevelt that social security and relief be combined so that relief would be given as a matter of right. Roosevelt rejected the proposal, maintaining that although the relief system and the social insurance system often applied to the same people, the two systems should be kept separate. A relief program, Roosevelt believed, should be temporary and should end as soon as business and employment opportunities revived, while he envisioned employment insurance and old age insurance as permanent parts of the economy (Schlesinger, Jr., 1953: 303-304). Concerning Hopkins' attempt to include relief as a part of the institutional social welfare system, Frances Perkins reported that Roosevelt "saw that this would be the very thing he had been saying he was against for years -- the dole" (Perkins, 1946: 284-285).

Another of the many controversial issues around the Social Security program had to do with the decision to fund social security insurances through employee contributions. Frances Perkins was amongst the many who raised objection to this, preferring that it be paid out of general tax revenues. With amazing foresight, Roosevelt saw this as a political decision rather than an economic one. He believed that public insurance should be a self-supporting system financed out of contributions and special taxes instead of general revenues. Years later, in response to a

complaint about employee contributions, Roosevelt said:

I guess you're right on the economics, but those taxes were never a problem of economics. They are politics all the way through. We put those payroll contributions there so as to give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their pensions and their unemployment benefits. With those taxes in there, no damn politician can ever scrap my social security program. (Quoted in Schlesinger, Jr., 1958: 308-309).

¹³William Bremer maintains that except for Mary van Kleeck and Harry Lurie, the group of New York influential social workers supported the conservative tone of the New Deal's social programs (Bremer, 1984: 173).

¹⁴See for example the challenging article by Dorothy Douglas in Social Work Today, "Unemployment Insurance -- For Whom?" in which she concluded that the Lundeen bill was far superior to the Social Security bill. Of the latter, she said:

At every step the supposed object of the Bill has increasingly been ignored. At every step each real safeguard for the 'security' of the workers had cynically been thrust aside, at every step increasing concern has been shown for each new device for the employers' immediate interests, at every step there has been more effective insistence upon saving the wealthy taxpayer at all costs (Douglas, 1935: 9-12, 34).

A similar point of view was taken in an unsigned article, "New Deal Security" (Social Work Today, 1935: 3-4).

¹⁵These figures excluded nonprofessional employees of social agencies, such as case aides and others who conducted initial interviews with applicants for relief or assisted with forms needed to determine eligibility (Fisher, 1980: 235).

¹⁶This number included newly recruited and untrained people working in the new or expanded local public welfare departments, and professional social workers who worked in FERA and its state and local divisions, in WPA and local work-relief programs in the Bureau of Public Assistance after the creation of the Social Security Board in 1935, and with the federal Children's Bureau, which was enlarged and strengthened (from Marion Hathaway, Trade Union Organization for Professional Workers, United Office and Professional Workers of America, CIO, 1939, in Fisher, 1980: 235).

¹⁷During 1936, a plea for social action was made by Harry Lurie:

Whether the Democrats or the Republicans achieve political power at the next election, the new Administration will be reinforced in the desire to quit the 'relief business.' There is nothing to prevent such a step except an aroused and organized movement of all elements who are in sympathy with the unemployed and who adhere to economic theories which will not make economic recovery dependent upon reduction of wages, standards, workers' insecurity and destruction of relief provisions (Lurie, 1936: 5-8).

REFERENCES

- Belsley, J. Lyle
1936 "The merit system in social work administration." *Compass* 17: 9-10.
- Bond, Elsie
1935 "Summary of the provisions of the Economic Security Bill." *Compass* 16: 7-10.
- Brandes, Stuart
1970 *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bremer, William
1984 *Depression Winters: New York Social Workers and the New Deal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bruno, Frank
1957 *Trends in Social Work*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Burner, David
1979 Herbert Hoover: A Public Life. New York: Knopf.
- Chambers, Clarke
1963 Seedtime of Reform. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Compass
1934 "The conference on governmental objectives for social work." No author. 15: 1-6.
- Compass
1935 "National relief policies." No author. 16: 3-6.
- Costin, Lela
1983 Two Sisters for Social Justice. Urbana, ILL: University of Illinois Press.
- Douglas, Dorothy
1935 "Unemployment insurance - for whom?" Social Work Today 2: 9-12, 34.
- Fisher, Jacob
1980 The Response of Social Work to the Depression. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman.
- Hawley, Ellis
1974 "Herbert Hoover, the Commerce Secretariat and the vision of an 'Associative State,' 1921-1928." Journal of American History 6: 116-140.
- Helvering v. Davis
1937 301 U.S. 671, 57 Sup. Ct. 792, 81 L. Ed. 1336 (1937).
- Hodson, William
1938 Proceedings of American Association of Social Workers Delegate Conference: 33.
- Hoover, Herbert
1922 American Individualism. New York: Doubleday, Page and Co.
- Klein, Philip
1936 "The future of the private agency." Social Work Today 4: 5-7.
- Kurzman, Paul
1974 Harry Hopkins and the New Deal. Fair Lawn, NJ: R.E. Burdick.
- Larson, Magali Sarfatti
1977 The Rise of Professionalism. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Levitt, Louis
1980 "Social work and social welfare: A conceptual matrix." Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare 7: 636-647.
- Lewis, Harold
1977 "The cause in function." Journal of the Otto Rank Association 11: 18-25.
- Lurie, Harry
1934 Proceedings of American Association of Social Workers Delegate Conference: 240-253.
- Lurie, Harry
1936 "Quitting the relief business." Social Work Today 3: 5-8.
- McMillan, Wayne
1937 Proceedings of American Association of Social Workers Delegate Conference: 191-224.
- Mauss, Armand
1975 Social Problems as Social Movements. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Morison, Samuel Eliot
1972 The Oxford History of the American People, Vol. 3. New York: Mentor.
- Olds, Victoria
1963 "The Freedmen's Bureau: A 19th century federal welfare agency." Social Casework 44: 247-254.
- Perkins, Frances
1946 The Roosevelt I Knew. New York: Viking.
- Pumphrey, Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey
1961 The Heritage of American Social Work. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reynolds, Bertha
1935 "Whom do social workers serve?" Social Work Today 2: 5-7, 34.
- Reynolds, Bertha
1936 "Education for public social work." Social Work Today 3: 10-12.
- Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr.
1958 The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr.
1960 The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- Social Service Review
 1934 "The Washington meeting." 8: 145-146.
- Social Work Today
 1935 "New deal security." No author. 3:3-4.
- Swift, Linton
 1935 Proceedings of American Association of
 Social Workers Delegate Conference: 12-20.
- Swift Linton
 1936 Proceedings of American Association of
 Social Workers Delegate Conference:
 279-294.
- Swift, Linton
 1937 Proceedings of American Association of
 Social Workers Delegate Conference:
 1-12.
- Theodorson, George and Achilles Theodorson
 1969 Modern Dictionary of Sociology. New
 York: Thomas Crowell.
- van Kleeck, Mary
 1934 "Our illusions regarding government."
 Proceedings of National Conference of
 Social Work. Chicago: University of
 Chicago Press: 473-485.