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TOWARD PARTISAN POLITICS IN A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION:  
UTILITY OF THE CANDIDATES POLL\*

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Bit by bit, during the past three years, the National Association of Social Workers and some of its local chapters have been moving in the direction of partisan political action.

Perhaps the essence of partisan political action is the selection and election of candidates for public office. The action is partisan in the sense that it is aligned with the established policies of the professional association, not that it is contained within any particular political party.

Defined thus, partisan political action does not encompass as broad a range of activities as either social action or social policy. Both of the latter strategies of action are usually considered by social workers to legitimately fall within their domain. On the other hand, partisan political action is a new and more controversial endeavor for organized social workers.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to describe the initial efforts of one local chapter, The Puget Sound Chapter; to engage in partisan politics by the conduct of a poll of candidates for election to the Washington State Legislature in 1974. Properly speaking, the Chapter endorsed no candidates, merely rated them from "weak" to "outstanding" on their agreement with NASW policies on relevant programs and their social welfare attitudes. Thus, it is a mild form of partisan politics that will be considered.

The paper will analyze the social and organizational context in which the candidates' poll occurred, and then report on the advantages and shortcomings of the poll as a technique for the assessment of political candidates. Finally, there will be a brief commentary on the functions of the professional association in the politicalization of the activities of organized social workers.

THE POLL AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL ACT IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

The sequence of events leading to the action undertaken by the Puget Sound Chapter can be described in terms of Smelser's theory of collective behavior.<sup>2</sup>

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Although the theory is intended to explain the genesis of collective behavior, such as mass demonstrations, hostile outbursts, and other social movements, it can be used to describe other forms of societal action. Smelser sees the process of collective behavior as a value-added process where:

"Each determinant is seen as logically--though not temporarily--prior to the next. Each determinant is seen as operating within the scope established by the prior, more general determinant. Each determinant is viewed as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the occurrence of an episode of collective behavior; taken together, the necessary conditions constitute the sufficient condition for its occurrence."<sup>3</sup>

The five determinants of collective behavior are labeled: structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth of a generalized hostile belief, mobilization of participants for action, operation of social control.

Structural conduciveness suggests that the social conditions are permissive of the occurrence of the action. Structural conduciveness is analyzed in terms of three variables which Smelser calls (a) the structure of responsibility, (b) the presence or absence of channels for expressing grievances, (c) facilitation of communication among the aggrieved.

Structural strain is the precondition that pertains particularly to the conflict of norms and values in the situation. In and of itself, it is not enough to cause the action, but it contributes its "value" to the eventual outcome.

There is a growth of a generalized hostile belief containing these elements: ambiguity, anxiety, assignment of responsibility to agents, a desire to punish or restrict the responsible agent, and a generalized belief in omnipotence. In addition, there may be confirmation of existing fears and hatreds, the introduction of new deprivation, reduction of opportunities for peaceful protest, and the indication of "failure" and the assignment of responsibility. However, action in the form of a "hostile outburst" or some other resolution of the structural strain will not occur unless there is a mobilization of leadership and the organization of a plan of action.

"The final stage of the value-added process that results in a hostile outburst is the actual mobilization and organization of action. It does not occur, however, unless the other determinants--conduciveness, strain, and a belief that has crystallized and spread--are present."<sup>4</sup>

The form of the action largely is determined by the presence of counter-deterrents of a preventive sort.

As will be seen in the paragraphs that follow, most of the elements pointed to by Smelser seem to have been present in the events surrounding the Puget Sound Chapter's venture into partisan politics. But the activities of a local chapter are also strongly influenced by the policies and activities of the national professional association of which it is a part. In other words, it is a part of a formal voluntary association which both stimulates and regulates the local activity. The question is asked: Does the presence of a motivated and active professional association act as a spur and/or a deterrent to political action? To answer this, the analysis must encompass the behavior of both the local and national organizations with respect to their stances on partisan political action.

### Structural strain

Both the local and national organizations resonated to the critical issues that faced the nation during this period, particularly those that involved social welfare policy. These critical issues were of a nature that demanded immediate action. It was the height of the Watergate period. During the previous decade there had been failure in the large government programs to end poverty, institutionalized racism, and to achieve urban renaissance. The Watergate affair had uncovered lawlessness and corruption in high office that forced the resignation of the President and dozens of other top leaders. Unemployment was widespread and inflation was growing. Instead of releasing funds for domestic use, the end of the war in Southeast Asia was accompanied by an unexplicable rise in the military budget. The government's social programs were drastically cut and their funds impounded. Structural strain was everywhere evident; there was a growth of generalized hostile beliefs. Social workers were in a peculiar and uncomfortable position. On the one hand, they were blamed by their clients for the impoverished circumstances that the clients experienced. On the other hand, they were universally blamed by the general public for "the welfare mess."

This frustration is eloquently expressed by then-President Mitchell I. Ginsberg in an article in June, 1972 NASW News, headlined: "These Trying Times: Siding With Virtue Is Not Enough!". He said that he couldn't remember "when attacks on social work and social services have been as heavy, consistent--and unfounded." The article reported that "social work's image with the general public, legislators, and other elected officials is near rock bottom." Subsequent stories decried the "White House's Attack on Social Work" and deplored the NASW Congressional scorecard: "1972's Legislative Successes are Small and Few."<sup>5</sup>

A similar frustration was experienced at the local level by the participants in the activities of the Puget Sound Chapter. In 1973, the Chapter joined a large community coalition calling for new national budget priorities which would rectify the drastic reductions in expenditures for social programs. Two congressional hearings were held in Seattle. The NASW was instrumental in preparing a report documenting the plight of social agencies and their clients. This report was presented at the hearings, and subsequently published. The congressmen joined the participants in deploring policies of the national administration.<sup>6</sup> Somewhat later the Puget Sound Chapter became one of the few chapters in the national association to officially call for the impeachment of President Nixon.

### Structural conduciveness

Many developments occurred at both the national and local levels which created the social conditions permissive of partisan political action.

At the end of 1972, the national office was moved to Washington, D.C., to a location one block from the White House, ten minutes from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and not much further from Capitol Hill. The move to the nation's capital followed closely upon the national Board of Directors' review of its political action policy. This policy empowers the national office, local chapters, and state councils to engage in lobbying, publishing of voting records of political candidates, the writing and promotion of specific legislation, petitioning of government officials and political parties, the entering into coalitions, and demonstrations and public gatherings, including marches on Washington. Furthermore, the national board and local chapters were empowered to endorse candidates for public office subject to certain organizational requirements and limitations, which will be discussed later. A poll of the local chapters in 1972 indicated that there were several dozen NASW members who had filed for a wide range of offices from school board member to congressman. Many were successful, including the president elect of the NASW, who is also a member of the Detroit Common Council.

By March 1973, with the U.S. budget under consideration, Glenn Allison, NASW Legislative Director, observed:

"There is no question that NASW interests and concerns have moved to center stage and, whether we wish it or not, we are deeply engaged in the games politicians play."

At the local level, during 1973-74 a series of events and activities made political action more salient for the membership. Besides the congressional hearings mentioned above, the Chapter renewed its long-standing campaign to secure the passage of state legislation requiring the licensure of social workers. One such bill was introduced by a

Chapter member who had been elected to the State Legislature in 1972. Chapter members, however, were alerted not to expect passage in the current session but to be prepared for a long campaign. The prediction was verified when the bill failed to get out of committee.

This generated support for another long-standing issue, whether the five chapters of NASW in the state should be combined into one State Chapter. This action was encouraged by the national organization for many reasons, not the least of which was the desire to become more potent in legislative reform. In 1974, the five chapters voted to merge. As a result of these activities, local and national, the Puget Sound Chapter was geared for political action.

#### Mobilization of participants for action

Although the professional association can motivate, legitimate, and coordinate activities at the national level, the arena for direct political action is more likely at the community level and the participants to be the local chapter members.

Historically, the Puget Sound Chapter has a long history of social and legislative action. Activities in the past have included the issuing of legislative bulletins, educational and lobbying efforts with legislators either on behalf of the association or in conjunction with coalitions. It maintains a part-time lobbyist at the State Capitol. For the most part this activity is conducted by a Division of Social Policy and Action, speaking for the Chapter. In addition, the Chapter is part of the Education and Legislative Action Network of the national association. Through participation in these activities, there has developed a corps of members interested and active in the process of social and political action.

Although the local Chapter had not engaged in partisan politics prior to this, its members had sometimes endorsed and campaigned for selected candidates in ad hoc committees of social workers which drew on the membership of the professional association as an organizing base. In recent years, two professional social workers had been elected to the State Legislature with the aid of these ad hoc committees.

In 1974, four social workers announced their candidacy for public office, three of them winning their primary elections. It was during these specific circumstances that the Executive Board of the Puget Sound Chapter officially empowered its Division of Social Policy and Action to proceed with the candidate's poll. The decision, in part, may have been influenced by the knowledge that among the supporters were energetic Chapter members skilled in survey research techniques who were willing to undertake the task.<sup>8</sup>

### The growth of a generalized hostile belief

It is reasonable to assume that during the years under study there was a growth of a generalized hostile belief among social workers directed at the frustrating national developments in social welfare policy. The open hearings with congressmen protesting the cuts in social programs as well as the resolution by the local Chapter to impeach President Nixon helped to define "the enemy" and establish a strategy for action. The failure of the campaign to secure the passage of the bill for the state licensing of social workers further reinforced the frustration and structured the action at the local level. Consequently, instead of ending in a "hostile outburst," the collective behavior of the social workers was directed into the channel of partisan politics. As will be seen in the next section, the careful requirements of the national organization for endorsement of candidates imposed a powerful counter-deterrent to the more drastic "hostile outburst."

### The operation of social controls

The incentives for a professional association to engage in partisan political action are many. Successful political action can provide it with direct representation in important governmental bodies. With direct representation, the policies of the sponsoring organization can be fostered and safeguarded. First hand information can be secured about bills and where leverage can be most effective for their passage. Through the use of the rights and privileges that accompany the holding of public office, legislative action can be facilitated. The office of the friendly legislator is both a listening post and a center for mobilization. Moreover, the political organization maintained by the officeholder can provide a basis for continuous public support of the issues of concern to the sponsoring organization.

Needless to say, all of these advantages may be turned the other way if the endorsement process is carried out in a haphazard or arbitrary manner. The act of endorsement may alienate other candidates in the event of their winning and thus result in program setbacks for the sponsoring organization, or they may result in divisiveness among members.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the professional organization that engages in partisan political action carefully defines the conditions and limitations under which endorsement may legitimately occur. The dangers inherent in the process would seem to make it imperative for a national organization to set the rules which govern local activities, and to institute a careful monitoring of the enforcement.

In the paragraphs that follow there is a statement of the national requirements of its chapters for the endorsement of political candidates. The paper will examine how the local Chapter observed these regulations

in what it did, together with comments about the utility candidates' poll as a strategy for partisan politics, saving comments about the process and Smelser's theory until the final section.

Six types for criteria for endorsement are required by the National Association of Social Workers for endorsement:<sup>10</sup>

1. Issue relevance. Vital social welfare issues of concern to the NASW must be at stake in the particular election for which candidates are endorsed. These issues must be stated clearly, and be consistent with the policies of the organization.
2. Area relevance. Endorsements can be made only of candidates living within the geographical or political jurisdiction of the endorsing body. In essence, this means presidential candidates can only be endorsed by the National Board, state-wide candidates by the State Council, etc.
3. Campaign readiness. Endorsements become meaningful when accompanied by campaign organization and funds in support of the candidates. Therefore, a specific program to back any endorsement should be delineated prior to the endorsement and as part of the endorsement consideration. Regardless of the administrative body making the endorsement, consideration should be given to the membership interests in the issues involved and on the act of endorsement.
4. Candidate requirements. Candidates must be given the opportunity to state their positions in writing. The endorsement of the candidate, however, is based on a number or complex of issues rather than a single issue. Furthermore, the candidate should be contacted for specific commitment on the issues in return for endorsement and made aware of the program to back the endorsement.
5. National review. Any endorsements should provide for National Office review of the endorsement process.
6. Tax-Exemption status. The endorsement process must comply with the provisions of the Internal Revenue Act (Section 501, C, 6) and the Federal and State Corrupt Practices Acts. Practically speaking, this means endorsement of political candidates is permissible so long as the endorsement is directly related to the goals and purposes of NASW, and so long as no substantial part of the organization's total activities is devoted to the



effort. The extensive use of funds for political activities may threaten the exempt status of any organization on the theory that the true purpose of the organization is political and not that stated in the application for exemption. The Federal Corrupt Practices Act forbids giving NASW funds to candidates for Federal office.

From an analysis of these criteria, it is evident that the first four are intended to guide local chapter action; the fifth empowers the National Office to review local procedures, and the sixth gives a cogent reason why rules should be observed--the national association might lose its favored tax status. Thus, the connection between the professional association and the federal government is identified.

In order to meet the criteria governing local activity, the Chapter adopted the strategy of the candidates' poll. This strategy involves questioning candidates on relevant issues, assessment of answers together with the rating of candidates from outstanding to weak, publication and dissemination of the results among selected groups of voters prior to the elections. It is possible for a poll to become the first step in a political campaign for candidates officially endorsed by the Chapter. In essence, this depends on the local organization's readiness to enter into full-fledged campaign activity, as well as other factors.

In the case at hand, no official endorsement of the local Chapter was requested, and political campaigning for preferred candidates was carried on in the usual ad hoc committees of social workers described earlier in the paper.

#### TECHNICAL/POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF THE POLL

Having arrived at the decision to undertake the candidates poll, several problems remained--problems in which organizational and technical research issues were intertwined. These will be discussed in sections titled: (a) Which candidates?, (b) What issues?, (c) Will candidates respond?, (d) How can the results be interpreted?, (e) How credible is the response?

##### Which candidates?

There are literally hundreds of candidates that file in the primary elections in a political jurisdiction of the size encompassed by the Puget Sound Chapter. Its constituency includes social workers living in four counties which contain about 46 percent of the residents of the State of Washington. The geographical area includes all or parts of four congressional districts and several dozen state legislative districts. A survey task of this magnitude was beyond the capacity of the

volunteer team assigned the task. Fortunately, the number of candidates is reduced by the time of the regular elections, but so is the time period for the poll. In the State of Washington there are five weeks between the two elections. Given this time constraint, the poll was limited to one county, King County, and to the candidates in the regular November election. The sample numbered 99 Democratic and Republican Party candidates for 52 state legislative offices, and 10 Democratic and Republican candidates for five Congressional districts. No attempt was made to poll the minority party candidates for these offices.

An alternate procedure for delimiting sample size is also suggested by the national NASW criteria for endorsement. Where the Chapter proposes its own candidates, perhaps it would be sufficient to interview only the candidates for those particular offices. Such was not the case in this instance. However, it should be noted that all three candidates for the regular elections who were professional social workers were included in the sampling plan adopted.

#### What issues?

The national requirements for endorsement state that "vital social welfare issues of concern to the NASW" must be at stake in the particular election. What is a "vital social welfare issue"? This is not specifically defined by the national organization, nor should it be in a broad policy guideline. Therefore, the team charged with the design of the poll selected issues which had received continuous attention by the national and local organizations in the immediate past and which were likely to appear on the legislative docket in the immediate future. These issues involved the state licensure of social workers, tax reform, national health insurance, appropriations for social programs, and new budget priorities.

Furthermore, a severe restriction was imposed on the number of issues explored and the detail required by the questionnaire. The poll was being mounted at the busiest time of the election. Clarity, brevity, and ease in completion were necessary criteria if the questionnaire was to be completed by the candidates. Consequently, the question formats were of the following order:

How do you rank the importance of each of the following programs for the well-being of the citizens of the state: essential, very important, important, acceptable, unacceptable, don't know? (20 social programs were listed such as day care, aid to families with dependent children, consumer advocacy, community mental health, etc.)

What is your opinion of the following issues: agree, disagree, no opinion? (10 issues were listed such as guaranteed annual income, national health insurance, state licensing of social workers, etc.)

The tax burden on the average citizen in Washington state should be eased by: (several options identified).

For effective control in inflation it will be necessary to institute: (several options identified).

Information about the candidate's background and characteristics was also obtained.

#### Will candidates respond?

The usual survey procedures were used to motivate responses. Accompanying the forms was a personalized letter on the NASW letterhead describing the nature of the organization and its desire to have this information as a service to membership and as a basis for possible endorsement. The letter indicated where further information could be obtained; it expressed an interest in working together in the future with the candidate on issues of mutual concern. A self-addressed stamped envelope was included. The candidate was requested to fill out and return the form by a specified date two weeks hence, together with a copy of his/her campaign literature. There was a follow-up telephone call to assure that the letter had been received and to encourage response.

In total, 38 of the 99 candidates for the state posts and a single Congressional candidate returned the filled-out questionnaires. Information was obtained for one or both candidates for 32 of the 52 state offices at stake in the elections.

Some reasons for this non-response can be determined from the telephone follow-up. Apparently, some candidates did not receive the original questionnaire although it was sent to them at the mailing address they listed with the Election Board at the time of filing. Either the public listing was inaccurate, or the address was a false one. Even though a correct address could be located, in many cases the candidate could not be contacted personally: phones were unlisted, temporarily disconnected, or they were hooked into answering services. When contacted, many candidates promised to return their answers, and few followed through. Most were friendly and evasive, saying: "I'm so busy I don't have time," "There are too many polls." One frankly stated that he didn't know anything about the issues that were raised in the poll. In short, the follow-up probably increased the number of returns by one-quarter.

Once returned, it was a simple process to transfer the contents of the questionnaire to a code sheet for further analysis since all the important items in the questionnaire were precoded.

### How can the results be interpreted?

The immediate purpose of the poll was to help members of the Puget Sound Chapter to make an informed choice among the candidates. To do this, a short six-page report of the survey was sent to each member (and the candidates) prior to election day. The report described how the survey was conducted and contained a rating of the candidates on their support of social programs and issues. An excerpt from the rating form is presented in Table 1.

Two types of ratings are made: a rating of the candidate's position on each of 17 social programs and issues, and a composite rating called the Summary Score. For the most part the ratings are based on a single item in the questionnaire. However, seven ratings include 2-7 items. The Summary Score contains 30 items. Each rating except the Summary Score is scaled from 0-4 as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- 4 Strong Support. The program is essential or very important.
- 3 Moderate Support. The program is important. I agree.
- 2 Weak Support. The program is acceptable.
- 1 Don't know. Ambivalent. There are contradictory opinions on parallel items.
- 0 Opposition. The program is unacceptable. I disagree.

While the Summary Score is based on the same items as the indices mentioned above, a slightly different weighting is given to the items. Candidates with a Summary Score of 90 and above were rated outstanding, 75-89 good, 60-74 average, under 60 weak.

By reference to the rating form (Table 1), an overall assessment of the candidate and his/her position on particular issues can be determined. For example, there were two candidates for the State Senate in the 35th Legislative District, both of whom answered the poll. Neither candidate is a strong one, Ruthe Ridder being rated "average" with a Summary Score of 69, and her opponent "weak" with a Summary Score of 37. The ratings on the 17 social programs and issues provide most of the details which went into the composite rating. However, note that there is little difference between the candidates on social work licensing and the right of social workers to lobby. Candidate Ridder states "don't know" on both issues while Candidate Griffin is "opposed." Candidate Ridder's position is tempered by a strong support of public social welfare policies and other social programs while her opponent is either "opposed" or doesn't know about them.

Having information on both candidates for the same public office is desirable, but not necessary, to guiding a choice of the person for whom to vote. For example, only one candidate for Position 2 of the House of

TABLE 1

Rating of Candidates on Support of Social Programs  
(an excerpt)

4= strong support  
3= moderate support  
2= weak support  
1= I don't know  
0= opposition

Scores in Selected Social Programs:

Legislative District: (HR: House of Representatives, Sen: State Senate) (R= Republican D= Democrat)	Overall Rating of Candidate:	Overall Score																
		1-Child Services	2-AFDC	3-Public Housing	4-Equal Opportunity	5-Health Services	6-Education	7-Increased Unemployment Compensation	8-Federally Guaranteed Employment	9-Federally Guaranteed Family Income	10-Welfare over Warfare Priorities	11-Advocacy of the Poor	12-Nat'l Health Insurance	13-Public Social Welfare	14-Social Work Lobby	15-Social Work Licensing	16-Tax Reform	17-Control Inflation
<u>35th Legislative District</u>																		
Sen. Paul L. Griffin (R)	Weak	37	3	1	0	1	3	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Ruthie Ridder (D)	Average	69	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	2	2	1	4	1	4	0
HR 1 JOHN L. O'BRIEN (D)	OUTSTANDING	94	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	0	4	2	4	4	2	4
Donald E. Ormsby (R)	Average	63	4	3	4	4	3	0	4	4	0	1	2	0	2	0	1	0
<u>36th Legislative District</u>																		
Sen. John S. Murray (R)	Good	83	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	2	2	4	1	2	4	4	1	0
HR 1 Edward Lubin (R)	Weak	44	3	1	0	4	3	1	0	0	3	0	1	1	4	4	0	4
HR 2 RAY MOORE (D)	OUTSTANDING	94	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	1	0
<u>37th Legislative District</u>																		
HR 2 PEGGY JOAN MAXIE (D)	OUTSTANDING	90	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	3	4	4	4	0

Representatives, 37th Legislative District (Peggy Joan Maxie) responded to the poll. But her Summary Score was an "outstanding" 90, and she was "weak" only with positions on welfare over warfare and control of inflation. Perhaps a vote is merited by this "outstanding" candidate, especially in the absence of information about her opponent. Candidate Lubin in another race in which we have information for one contender is a "weak" candidate in general, although he strongly supports social work licensing and lobbying. Despite these two positive ratings, can the candidate be supported by professional social workers? These examples illustrate the utility of the ratings both as a voter's guide and for subsequent legislative action on particular issues. The latter opinion is reinforced by the many requests for the results of the poll made by registered lobbyists following the election.

#### How credible is the response?

It is difficult to assess the credibility of the information obtained from a poll, especially when the respondents are political candidates standing for election. However, several tests of credibility were made which support the conclusion that the results are fairly reliable and valid.

The usual checks for item clarity, response set, and internal consistency were performed. Those who answered the questionnaire had little difficulty in understanding the contents: there were very few unchecked items. Furthermore, all of the options for each item were used by some candidates, and some candidates used every option at some place in the questionnaire. This is indicated by the variety of answers recorded in Tables 1-3. The range in Summary Scores varied from 26-100, and on each of separate items from 0-4. A partial check on the internal consistency of response was provided by asking candidates to rank the importance of National Health Insurance and the Guaranteed Annual Income to the citizens of our state. Later in the questionnaire they stated their opinion of whether these pieces of legislation should be adopted by the federal government. Still later, they checked options for the National Health Insurance with which they agreed. Uniformly, there was consistency and accuracy in response.

The findings of the poll are consistent with other studies of political attitudes.<sup>13</sup> The Democratic candidates in general are more likely to be in favor of social programs than their Republican counterparts. Furthermore, it is evident, as illustrated in Table 2, that the party self-designation for the candidates is a reasonably good scale of their liberalism-conservatism. Greatest support is in the following predicted order: independent and moderate Democrats, strong Democrats, independent and moderate Republicans, strong Republicans. The correlation between this scale and the extent of support for social programs is .91, according to gamma, statistically significant well beyond the .01 level.<sup>14</sup>

TABLE 2

Rating of Candidates by Party Identification

Support of Social Welfare Programs and Issues	Democratic		Republican	
	Independent or Moderate	Strong	Independent or Moderate	Strong
Outstanding (90-100)	6	7		
Good (75-89)	3	4	2	
Average (60-74)		3	6	1
Weak (under 60)		1	2	3

The same finding is consistently borne out in the analysis of individual items of the candidates' poll. See Table 3.

Furthermore, there is consistency between the attitudes expressed on this poll as compared with the prior voting records of 13 candidates for whom we have both pieces of information.

DISCUSSION

This paper has described a set of events and circumstances that led a professional association, the Puget Sound Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, to enter into partisan politics. The form of partisan politics was the attempt to influence the outcome of an election by the conduct of a candidates' poll and the publication of the results for the membership. This was a very mild form of partisan action, limited both by national guidelines and by the willingness and potency of the local chapter to mount a sustained campaign in the interests of the preferred candidates. The case is of some interest because it represents the initial steps of the professional association to broaden its more typical interest in social policy and action to encompass partisan politics; that is, it is a case study of partisan political action by a professional association. It is also of interest

TABLE 3

Rating of Democratic and Republican Candidates'  
Support of Social Programs and Issues\*

Issue or Program:	Rating of Candidates									
	Democratic					Republican				
	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0
1--Child Services	14	8	2			4	6	4		
2--AFDC	22	1	1			9	2	1	2	
3--Public Housing	17	5		1	1	2	3	5	2	2
4--Equal Opportunity	21	2		1		8	2	2	2	
5--Health Services	20	4				6	5	3		
6--Education	20	3		1		5	3	1	4	1
7--Increased Unemployment Compensation	14	8		1	1	3	3	2	2	4
8--Federally Guaranteed Employment	15	5		4		1		4	6	3
9--Guaranteed Family Income	11	5	5	3		3	1	2	3	5
10--Welfare over Warfare Priorities	10		7	2	5	3		4	3	4
11--Advocacy of the Poor.	14	3	7			2	2	5	4	1
12--National Health Insurance	9	6	3	4	2	1	1	1	5	6
13--Public Welfare Attitudes	17	3	3	1		2	1	7	1	3
14--Social Work Right to Lobby	19			5		8			2	4
15--Social Work Licensure	15			8	1	7			3	4
16--Tax Reform	16	1	1	2	4	3	1	1	5	4
17--Controls over Inflation	9			4	11	2				12

\*4= strong support  
3= moderate support  
2= weak support  
1= I don't know  
0= opposition



because it illustrated how technical research procedures can be used in the process--a subject of some concern to researcher-activists.

In describing the events leading to the local decision to engage in partisan politics, the paper used Smelser's theory of collective behavior as a device for organizing the data into a coherent whole.<sup>16</sup> As such, the theory was quite useful. At a minimum it provided a checklist for the observer. The events and circumstances could reasonably be classified in terms of the five functional components of collective behavior: structural strain, structural conduciveness, growth of generalized hostile belief, mobilization of participants for action, operation of control.

Furthermore, the theory is explicit about the role of counterdeterrents in the prevention of hostile outbursts. In the case at hand, it would seem that the professional association acts both as a spur and a counter-deterrent to political action. It provides orderly channels through which frustrations can be expressed, protests channeled, and the attempt at political reform be mounted.

Pivin and Cloward in their book, Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare, point to the regulatory function of the state. The state regulates welfare spending in order to maintain civil order, low-wage work, and inequality.<sup>17</sup> But, in their book, Pivin and Cloward don't show how the professional association is involved in this process. If the professional association is conceived as quasi-governmental in character, then it might be expected to enhance the regulatory, counter-deterrent function of the state. On the other hand, perhaps all levels of the professional association do not function in the same way. In the organizational division of labor perhaps it is the national professional association that is more likely to perform this function, and the local organization the mobilization for reform.

The role of the national professional association as a regulatory agency, as a spur, and a counterdeterrent to political action, warrants more extended discussion.<sup>18</sup>

This study has demonstrated that the guidelines of the national association are workable for the type of political action entered into by the Puget Sound Chapter. However, the guidelines place severe restrictions on the organization if it wishes to sponsor its own candidates. Ordinarily a political campaign organization is set up months in advance of the election and it works for specific candidates. The national guidelines would seem to rule out this option by the requirement that all candidates be given the opportunity to state their positions in writing and thus potentially be eligible for endorsement. So long as this requirement remains, the NASW will be placed in a reactive position, and candidates who wish to run on its platform will need to do so without

official endorsement until a full slate enters. This restriction need not present a major barrier to the entry of professional associations into partisan politics, for they can always use the strategy of the candidates' poll. Moreover, at the present stage of political development, it is likely that more chapters will adopt this strategy than nominate their own candidates.

The experience with the candidates' poll in the Puget Sound region indicates that this strategy is viable but could stand improvement. In particular, ways should be found to assure wider response from candidates. It is likely that to accomplish this, questionnaires will have to be filled out during a personal interview with the candidate rather than by mail. To do this, a much larger corps of workers will be needed than in the present effort. This can be an asset. By participating in the polling process, members are educated on the issues and activated, and there the likelihood of securing active campaign organization is enhanced.<sup>19</sup>

How useful the survey results will be to continuing legislative action remains to be seen.<sup>20</sup> The poll is one way the professional association has of making itself and its program visible and persuasive to political figures. It is a bridge to future negotiation and collaboration.

Currently, candidate ratings are based on the examination of the candidate's credentials, including the prior voting records of incumbents. The poll is an added technique that provides an equal opportunity to incumbents and non-incumbents alike to state their views on issues of concern to the poll takers. As such, it is a valuable tool for professional associations as they embark on the turbulent and uncertain seas of partisan political activity.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>If social policy is "concerned with the right ordering of the network of relationships between men and women who live together in societies, or with the principles which should govern the activities of individuals and groups so far as they affect the lives and interests of other people," and if social action is "individual or group activity designed to influence a change in social policy," then partisan political action is narrower and more specific in focus. It is primarily concerned with the selection and election of candidates to public office. It is a part of politics, "an exchange process in which individuals, groups, and organizations, including political parties, invest their energies and resources in the expectation of some return or reward."

The definition of social policy is that of A. Macbeath, Can Social Policies Be Rationally Tested? (London: Oxford University Press, 1957) p. 188. The definition of social action is that of Daniel Thursz,

"Social Action," in Robert Morris, et al. (eds.), Encyclopedia of Social Work (New York National Association of Social Workers, 1971) Vol. II, p. 1189. For discussion, see David G. Gil, "A Systematic Approach to Social Policy Analysis," Social Service Review, Vol. 44, No. 4 (December 1970), pp. 411-426. The definition of politics appears in Murray B. Meld, "Social Work and the Political Process," in Social Work in Transition: Issues, Dilemmas, and Choices (Seattle: School of Social Work, University of Washington, 1974), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: Free Press, 1962). The paragraphs that follow paraphrase Jerry M. Lewis, "A Study of the Kent State Incident Using Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior," Sociological Inquiry, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 87-96.

<sup>3</sup>Smelser, Ibid., page 91.

<sup>4</sup>Smelser, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>5</sup>The NASW News is the monthly newspaper of the professional association. A content analysis covering the period, 1972-1974, indicates that there were one to three news stories per issue devoted to similar accounts and describing legislative and political activities of the association. For a more comprehensive history of events, see Alan Gartner, Colin Greer, and Frank Riessman (eds.), What Nixon Is Doing to Us (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

<sup>6</sup>The NASW statement characterized the Nixon Administration as "misguided, stingy, deceptive, and heartless," and cited many instances in documentation of these charges. See the "Statement of the Puget Sound Chapter, NASW," Second Public Hearing on Federal Budget Priorities Before Congressmen Brock Adams and Joel Pritchard, Langston Hughes Center, Seattle, Washington. (Mimeographed), 1974.

<sup>7</sup>NASW News, Vol. 18, No. 5 (March 1973), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>The Chapter has often used the survey device to further organizational aims. See L. K. Northwood, "The Membership Poll as an Aid to Policy Formation in a Professional Association--The Issue of Peace and Disarmament," Study Papers on Peace and Disarmament, Series A, June-July 1963, National Association of Social Workers.

<sup>9</sup>These potential dangers were explicitly noted by the National Executive Board when they discussed this policy. See "Do's, Don't's, and If's of Political Action--NASW Board Adopts New Policy," NASW News, Vol. 17, No. 5 (Aug.-Sept. 1972), pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup>These criteria are paraphrased from the statement of the National Board. Ibid.

- <sup>11</sup>The following articles were useful as sources of question format and content: John Hamilton and William King, "Summary Study of the Alabama State Legislature," (Mimeographed paper, University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama, October 1972). Kirk Elifson and William Chamberlain, "Recipients' Attitudes Toward Welfare," Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 1, 4 (Summer 1974), pp. 186-198. Charles Ramsey and Rita Brailo, "Public Concepts of Poverty, The County Commissioners' View," Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 1, 2 (Winter 1973-74), pp. 65-80.
- <sup>12</sup>Three ratings lack the scale value of two and three: Social Work Right to Lobby, Social Work Licensure, and Controls Over Inflation.
- <sup>13</sup>Richard F. Hamilton. Class and Politics in the United States (New York: Wiley, 1972). See especially Chapter 3, pp. 83-151.
- <sup>14</sup>Herman J. Loether and Donald G. McTavish. Inferential Statistics for Sociologists: An Introduction (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974) pp. 218-221.
- <sup>15</sup>A test of this was performed in the following way. As members of the State House of Representatives, these 13 candidates voted either for or against social legislation on 15 occasions. The candidates were rank ordered on the number of votes cast favoring social legislation. This rank order was compared with the rank order of the candidates on their overall score in support of social programs. A correlation of .67 exists between the two series, which is statistically significant at the .01 level according to procedures reported in Helen M. Walker and Joseph Lev, Statistical Inference (New York: Henry Holt, 1953) pp. 278-283. The voting record of candidates is reported in Labor Looks at the 43rd Session of the Washington State Legislature (Seattle: Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, June, 1974).
- <sup>16</sup>Milgram, Stanley and Toch, Hans. "Collective Behavior: Crowds and Social Movements," in G. Lindzey and E. Aronson (eds.), The Handbook of Social Psychology (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969) pp. 507-510.
- <sup>17</sup>Francis Fox Pivin and Richard A. Cloward (New York: Pantheon, 1971).
- <sup>18</sup>For brief but cogent discussions of the subject, see: Robert Ross and Graham L. Staines, "The Politics of Analyzing Social Problems," Social Problems, 20, 1 (Summer 1972), pp. 18-40; Edward S. Greenberg, Serving the Few: Corporate Capitalism and the Bias of Government Policy (New York: Wiley, 1974), pp. 214-226.
- <sup>19</sup>Richard F. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-21. For a general discussion, see David Horton Smith, Frank Penna and Cathy Nikkelorme, Voluntary Sector Policy Research Needs (Washington, D.C.: Center for Voluntary Society, 1974), Chapter 7, pp. 38-51.
- <sup>20</sup>Just after the paper was completed, the Chapter was extended an invitation to meet with a group of 20 legislators to discuss their legislative program. There is no way to know with certainty that this can be attributed to the Chapter's pre-election political activities. At about the same time (January, 1975), the NASW News announced that sections of the Hatch Act had been repealed which prohibited political campaigning by government workers. NASW's Second Vice-President, Mayor Howard N. Lee, was quoted as saying that there is a "distinct need for social workers to participate in the political arena in an effort to shape rules and regulations to fit people instead of helping people conform to rules."