

*An Anniversary
Celebration
featuring
Human Rights
and
Social Work*

Annual Social Work Day at the United Nations

2008

Katherine A. Kendall, PhD
Honorary President, IASSW

Introduction

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY of Social Work Day at the United Nations and in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Katherine A. Kendall Institute for International Social Work Education (KAKI) is pleased to publish this document that captures the international spirit and the names of those social workers who have provided leadership within the United Nations from 1947 to the present. Celebration and commemoration suggest a gathering of people. In this case the gathering is highlighted by students representing the contemporary renewal of the social work profession and by those whose contributions represent the proud and noble history of the profession. Our text captures this richness of the present and the past.

Named for Katherine A. Kendall, an icon in international social work education, the Katherine A. Kendall Institute was founded in 2004 under the auspices of the Council on Social Work Education in Alexandria, Virginia. The Institute's mission is to prepare educators, researchers, students, and practitioners for an increasingly global community. It promotes standards of excellence for international social work to integrate related concepts into social work curricula and seeks to enrich perspectives, understanding, collaboration, and networking within the social work community.

Introduction

And who better than Katherine Kendall to produce an account of this special anniversary celebration of social work involvement with the United Nations? Recruited in 1947 as a social affairs officer in the newly established Secretariat, Kendall conducted studies on training and exchange of social welfare personnel that were instrumental in making the provision of social welfare advisory services and the promotion of social work education high priority activities for the Social Commission of the Economic and Social Council. For more than a decade, the technical assistance programs launched by the United Nations and UNICEF were heavily weighted with projects involving social workers. The account that follows pays tribute to many who participated in those early years, as well as to those who have continued to contribute to the important humanitarian work of the United Nations. As with any such historical document, there may be inadvertent omissions; please call them to our attention and we will gladly correct them. We hope this document chronicles the proud history and contributions of social work to the diverse and rich work of the United Nations and the social work profession.

Julia M. Watkins
October 2008

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ANNIVERSARIES EVOKE MEMORIES of past glory and inspire visions of goals yet to be achieved. And so it was on March 31, 2008, when an audience of more than 900, including some 600 social work leaders, educators, and practitioners and 300 graduate and undergraduate social work students, filled the Economic and Social Council Chamber at the United Nations (UN) for a double celebration. The 25th anniversary at the UN of Annual Social Work Day, which celebrates social work as a global profession, was joined with the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a renewed commitment to human rights as central to international social work. The program, rich in content on global problems and the need for a social work contribution to global solutions, was produced by Robin Mama, representing the

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International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), and Janice W. Wetzel, representing the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).



Lena Dominelli, immediate past president of IASSW; Craig Mokhiber, deputy secretary, Office of the High Commission of Human Rights; Molly Bruce; and Abye Tasse, president of IASSW.

Craig Mokhiber, deputy secretary, Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, opened the session with greetings from the UN and a presentation that received an enthusiastic response. Mokhiber cautioned that people are facing dangerous times, when even the concept of human rights is under attack. Noting the political risks to the concept of human rights and the work of the UN, he remarked that new strategies are needed for effective implementation of the human rights convention. Praising the dedication of social workers, Mokhiber encouraged the profession to remain active in human

rights, and observed that social work “brings a meaningful agenda for actually implementing these rights as well as bringing attention to vulnerable groups, including those who are unpopular.”

Margaret (Molly) Bruce, one of the few survivors among those involved in producing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and its legally binding covenants, embellished the anniversary theme with a

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Molly Bruce, Robin Mama of IFSW, and Janice Wood Wetzel of IASSW greet each other before the celebration begins. (Photo: Ruben Woolcott)

moving account of her experience in working with Eleanor Roosevelt. Sixty years ago, on December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the UN proclaimed the UDHR as “a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations.”

Molly Bruce joined the UN staff in 1946 as a junior officer of the fledgling human rights division. She introduced her talk with an account of the very different world of the 1940s, with no computers, cell phones, or television, severe rationing in Britain and everywhere signs of destruction of the last days of World War II. This was the world into which the newly established United Nations was launched when it moved from San Francisco to London (Bruce’s own home) for the first meeting of the General Assembly. And this was when Eleanor Roosevelt first appeared on the scene. The prevailing view of women’s role at this time was underlined by a comment made by Roosevelt herself:

During the entire London session I walked on eggs. I knew that as the only woman on the delegation I was not very welcome. Moreover, if I failed to be a useful member, it would not be considered that I as a woman had failed but that all women had failed and there would be little chance for others to serve in the near future.

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Fail she did not, and the name *Eleanor Roosevelt* has become synonymous with human rights. Molly Bruce continued to work closely with Roosevelt and the other key architects of what emerged as the first comprehensive international agreement setting forth the rights and freedoms to which all human beings are entitled without discrimination. Bruce closed her talk with this advice given by Eleanor Roosevelt many years ago:



Eleanor Roosevelt announces the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—her great achievement. (United Nations Photo)

Where after all do human rights begin? In small places close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunities, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.

Eleanor Roosevelt continues to inspire new generations of social workers, as seen in this comment by a student participant in the conference:

To hear the voice of someone involved in the drafting of UN UDHR and then to get her to sign my copy of it was amazing. This is something to

*Implementing
Human
Rights —
the
Social Work
Agenda*

show my children years from now. I chose to read “A World Made New” long before I knew Ms Margaret Bruce was going to be the keynote on this auspicious anniversary of the UN UDHR. I chose it because Eleanor Roosevelt was a brave and strong woman. She had the courage to stand up for the vulnerable populations and to fulfill her husband’s dreams.

Social work’s meaningful agenda for actually implementing those rights, as commended by Craig Mokhiber, emerges clearly in Article 25:

- (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Mokhiber noted that social workers inevitably monitor human rights through their routine work. He emphasized, however, that a human rights approach is about social justice, not charity. Implementation must go beyond palliative measures and focus on empowering people to assert their

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social and political rights. The power of his message is revealed in this comment by a student in an evaluation of the UN experience:

I was very impressed by the first speaker, Craig Mokhiber, at the UN Conference. . . . He was quite dynamic and passionate on the topics that he covered. It was like a breath of fresh air to be listening to someone who truly thinks and knows things need to change or we are in for a world in trouble. . . . He helped me to feel less . . . hopeless. . . . To me the most valuable thing about the conference was that there are people out there trying to make change and that all hope is not lost.

How social workers are dealing with the “world in trouble” was the subject of every following presentation. In welcoming the participants, David Jones, president of the IFSW, called attention to the impact of globalization on the many social problems handled by social workers. Abye Tasse, president of the IASSW, spoke on social development in Africa, with an emphasis on poverty as a violation of human rights. Lena Dominelli, immediate past president of IASSW, explored in scholarly detail gender issues in a presentation on the critical impact of globalization on women and children. The importance of mental health programs in disaster relief was revealed in a paper by



IFSW President David Jones welcomes participants to the 25th anniversary of Social Work Day at the United Nations. (Photo: Ruben Woolcott)

*Make
Your Voice
Be Heard,
Empower
People and
Fight*

Christophe Lobry-Boulanger, American Red Cross, on the humanitarian response to the trauma of disaster. The magnitude of global social problems, as they emerged from those presentations, hit home for many of the students, as noted in this comment:

I found the statistics at the conference to be shocking. The fact that half of the human race lives off less than two dollars a day is heartbreaking and disturbing. I found significant value in the statistics as well as the personal and passionate opinions of the speakers at the UN conference. I think it's so easy for people to disregard the global suffering that needs to be addressed. Americans have these same social problems but not to the degree that people face globally. This trip reminded me of the importance to make your voice be heard, empower people and fight for all to receive these basic human rights.

Helen Hamlin, a social worker who chaired the International Federation of Ageing, wrapped up the program by noting the relevance of the speakers' points to social work and with an encouraging account of the contribution that social work not only can make but has made to the work of the UN. As a reminder of the long association of the social work profession with the UN in a variety of significant roles, Janice Wood Wetzel, main UN representative for IASSW and cochair of the conference, introduced Katherine Kendall, honorary president and retired secretary-general,

*UN Declares
Social Work a
Professional
Discipline
Requiring
Professional
Education*

IASSW, noting, “While we’re celebrating 25 years of social work at the UN, we really have a 60-year legacy, thanks to Katherine Kendall.”

Kendall responded with an account of her employment in 1947 as a social affairs officer shortly after the UN was established and while it was located at Lake Success on Long Island. She noted there was a certain ironic satisfaction in launching this great new effort to produce a world forever at peace in a huge factory that had previously produced weapons of war.

Kendall told the audience about studies she conducted on social work training, international fellowships, and exchange of personnel for the UN Social Commission. That research was authorized at the very first meeting of the Commission in 1946 in a resolution calling for studies to guide the long-term training program of assistance to governments. After favorable review by all involved, *Social Work Training: An International Survey*, the major report that Kendall produced, was published in 1950 accompanied by the following resolution as adopted by ECOSOC and the General Assembly:

That social work should in principle be a professional function performed by men and women who have received professional training . . . in universities or special schools of the highest possible quality and should be sufficiently comprehensive to do justice to both the variety and unity of social work.

*A Spirit of
Hope and
Determination*

Kendall noted that this resolution led to more than a decade of involvement by the UN and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the promotion of social work education. Schools of social work were established throughout the new nations and developing world; faculty members were qualified through generous international scholarships; and social work education worldwide was enriched through international and regional seminars, expert groups, and consultation services. With the IASSW as an active partner in all the UN and UNICEF technical assistance programs, Kendall referred to this as "the glory period" in international social work. She concluded her remarks:

Working at the UN in those beginning years was an unforgettable experience. Everyone was totally imbued (or so it seemed to me) with a spirit of hope and determination to make the UN a reality. We were international civil servants with the interests of the world at heart and convinced that was also what was best for our own countries. If we did not think and act as internationalists we could not have long survived in the heady atmosphere of those early years. It was truly quite wonderful. I hope that this conference will open the minds of all who are here, and particularly the students, to the world out there and their stake in acquiring a global view of their profession.

Michael Cronin, main representative for IFSW, then introduced David Roth, Senior Fellow, Child Welfare League and UN representative. Roth described

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the beginnings sponsored by a small committee in New York organized by the Hunter College School of Social Work and the New York chapter of NASW:



David Roth, Senior Fellow, Child Welfare League, with IASSW Honorary President Katherine Kendall.

From an audience of about 100 to today's audience of about 1,000 is an incredible achievement, probably due in large part to the impact of globalization on the social work response to the massive social problems that require solution. The IFSW has placed a high priority on human rights, which affect all aspects of social work practice.

He referred to the many presentations made by IFSW and IASSW in successive years on Annual Social Work Day and in the various components of the UN and its specialized agencies. In a joint activity with

IASSW, ISW produced *Human Rights and Social Work: A Manual for Schools of Social Work and the Social Work Profession*, presently being updated. In one form or another, information was made available on racial and ethnic oppression; the rights of women; migrants and immigrants; services for refugees; eradication of extreme poverty; elimination of the worst forms of child labor and recruitment of child soldiers; prevention and treatment of HIV-AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis; reduction of child and

*Remembering
Social Workers
at the UN
From 1947
to the Present*

maternal mortality; and the rights of children, especially girls, to free elementary education.

Roth said in closing his remarks that “Underlying all the efforts for a safer, healthier, more peaceful and prosperous world are universal human rights, the cornerstone of the social work profession.”

A number of the speakers at this special Social Work Day at the UN paid tribute to the many social workers who through the years have participated in the work of the UN. To place on record the names of those who have served in a variety of roles was recommended as a desirable extension of the anniversary celebration. Memories have been probed, affiliations searched, and friendships plumbed, but in going back as far as 1947, there are bound to be omissions for which we apologize. (If your name should appear, please contact the publications manager at the Council on Social Work Education, and it will be added.)

Although the brief identifying information in the following paragraphs will not do justice to the accomplishments of those listed, it will indicate the place social workers have at the forefront of working toward a world where all people are treated with dignity, equality, and respect. That is a reason to look ahead with pride and confidence in social work as a global profession ready to meet future challenges.

Sharing the Vision



High-ranking officials in the ministries and departments of social welfare in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom were prominently represented in the early work of ECOSOC and its Social Commission. This led to the establishment of social welfare services and social work education as a high priority program of technical assistance sponsored by the UN. George Davidson (Canada), Ellen Winston (US), and Geraldine Aves (UK) were notable contributors as advisors and participants in program planning. Winston, of The US Department of Health, Education and Welfare (US HEW), assisted by Herman Stein (US), organized the landmark International Conference of Ministers of Social Welfare in 1968, which involved high officials of government and influential observers from almost 100 countries. A unanimous resolution underlined the importance of social welfare policies and services in promoting social progress and social justice.

*Notable
Social Workers
in
Leadership Roles
at the UN*

Davidson's association with the UN and his service to its total mission also merits special attention. It began with membership on the Social Commission, after which Davidson continued as Canada's senior delegate, proceeded as president of ECOSOC, and ended as senior undersecretary general of the UN. The Canadian staff contribution also included Phyllis Burns and George Hougham, who provided strong support for social welfare.

UNICEF also benefited from social work leadership from Canada. Adelaide Sinclair, serving as deputy chief in the early years, was highly influential in shaping the original and on-going program.

US HEW staff served as important members of the UN delegation. Prominent among them was Charles Schottland, accompanied by Dorothy Lally as his staff assistant. They both gave outstanding service in charting and shaping the initial program activities authorized by the Social Commission and ECOSOC. John Charnow gave years of service as secretary to the UNICEF Board of Directors.

Herman Stein (US), and Eileen Younghusband (UK) moved in and out of the UN system as both staff and volunteers, carrying an array of high-level responsibilities as consultants to top officials, advisors to countries, trainers of staff, and producers of reports with significant impact on policies. Their contributions are too numerous for detailed inclusion in this account.

Other countries with notable social work representation include the

*Responsibility
for UN
Social Welfare
and Related
Services*

Netherlands, which sent as its representatives on the Social Commission Jan de Jongh (director of the world's oldest school of social work in Amsterdam and later president of the IASSW) followed by Diuke Heroma (outstanding social work leader and Member of Parliament). Sybil Frances, notable for her work throughout the Caribbean, was a member of the first UN delegation from Jamaica as an independent nation. Erma Sailer (Austria), whose career carried her from social work education into national prominence as a diplomat and ambassador, conducted special missions and reports for the UN.

Managing the Programs

Under a variety of titles, social workers have assumed responsibility for UN social welfare and related services in the Headquarters office, its regional offices, and the various offices of the Specialized Agencies. American social workers Dorothy Kahn and Martha Branscombe, followed by Aida Gindy (Egypt), carried major responsibility as chiefs of social service for social work activities at Headquarters. Marguerite Pohek (US) in the Geneva office directed a creative and highly successful seminar program in Europe for faculty training. Mukunda Rao (India and US) was in charge of social welfare activities from a newly established base in UN City, Vienna. Frances Yasas (US and India), Meher Nanavatty (India), and Angelina Almanzor (Philippines) carried leadership responsibilities in the Regional Office for

*Promoting
Social Progress
and Social
Justice*

Asia in Bangkok. George Walmsley (US and Peru) directed development activities in Asia and Latin America. In related UN agencies, Hari Brissimi (Greece) and Nazneen Mayadas (India and US) were in charge of social services for the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR). Following 20 years as a training advisor for UNICEF, Dolores Lasan (Philippines) served UNHCR as a deputy chief.

Staffing the Services

The strong initial emphasis on the technical assistance programs of the UN and its Specialized Agencies on social welfare services and social work education led to the employment of a substantial number of social workers as social affairs officers, consultants, and expert advisors for long- and short-term assignments. The apparent dominance of Americans in the lists is understandable in light of the times. In the immediate postwar period, the United States was the world's most admired nation. That, and the perceived advanced standing of social work services and training in the United States led inevitably to the recruitment of Americans for staff and consultation assignments.

Staff and Consultants—United States: Maude Barrett, Martha Bragin, James Dumpson, Morris Fox, David French, Nellie Hartman, Cora Kasius,

*Outstanding
Records
of Service*

James Kelly, Francis Manis, Richard Parvis, and Barry Rigby (UNHCR).

Staff and Consultants—Other Countries: Social workers from India, who have served in various capacities, included internationally known Armaity Desai, Vera Mehta, and Parin Vakharia. The Philippines has been represented by a number of talented social workers at Headquarters, in the regional offices, and as consultants: Josefa Martinez, Virginia Paraiso, Teresita Sabater Palacios, Teresita Silva, and Juana Silverio. From other countries these have been identified: Gloria Abate (Peru), Tatsuru Akimoto (Japan), Seno Cornely (Brazil), Sattereh Farman-Farmaian (Iran), John Lawrence (Australia), and Rifat Rashid (Pakistan).

Supporting the Mission

In the formative years of the UN a number of social work leaders were involved in the programs and seminars sponsored by UN and UNICEF, but without titles or special assignments. A special course for foreign students organized by Robin Huws Jones (UK) at Swansea University, Wales, was selected by the UN Department of Social Affairs as a major training resource for its fellowship program. With outstanding records of service in the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA), American social work leaders Elma Ashton, Eileen Blackey, Irving Fasteau, Donald Howard, and

*Advocating
for
Human Rights
and
Social Justice*

Susan Pettiss continued to support and advance international social work in cooperation with the UN. Prominent social work educators such as Gordon Hamilton and Florence Hollis (both of Columbia University) were among the many social workers recruited by the Geneva office of the UN as leaders of the European faculty training seminars. Richard Splane in Canada and Kurt Reichert and Caroline Ware in the United States produced or contributed to important UN activities and publications. An international fellowship program established by Edward Mullen of Columbia University School of Social Work made possible collaborative work with the ECOSOC Secretariat on projects related to social betterment and world peace.

Advocating for Human Rights and Social Justice

The IASSW and IFSW both hold consultative status with ECOSOC as special NGOs. This accords access to UN facilities and documents and permits participation in areas of activity in which the IASSW and IFSW have competence. The IASSW, having received consultative status in 1947, played a role bordering on partnership in the work of the Social Commission for more than a decade in what was then called the social field. It has continued to the present as an active NGO participating in the work of a much wider range of ECOSOC commissions and committees.

*Fostering
Cooperative
Action
on a
Wide Variety
of
Programs*

Because of the early focus on social welfare activities and social work training, both written and verbal interventions by IASSW representatives were permitted and used by Commission members in discussions on policies and programs. Personal interaction between IASSW representatives, UN staff, and Commission members also fostered cooperative action on a wide variety of programs for the advancement of social work education. When the Social Commission became the Commission for Social Development, a new program emphasis on social and economic development led to a marked decline in social work interventions. However, as indicated above, active participation did continue. The IFSW, on being awarded consultative status in 1959, soon became an advocate for issues of concern to its worldwide membership. In addition to the emphasis placed on human rights and the rights of the child, the IFSW, like the IASSW, is active in committee work on the family, aging, the status of women, mental health, immigrants, and refugees. With the major activities of interest to both organizations as NGOs occurring at Headquarters in New York, their representatives, unless otherwise identified, are Americans.

IASSW Representatives: Headed by Katherine Kendall throughout her years with IASSW, team members at UN Headquarters and UNICEF included Charles Guzzetta, who prepared many written interventions; Anna King,

*A
Succession
of Leading
Social Work
Educators*

Mildred Sikkema, Rosa Perla Resnick, Yvonne Asamoah, Elizabeth Neely, and Patricia Stickney. When Kendall retired, Janice Wood Wetzel took charge as main representative. She is currently assisted by Resnick, Guzzetta, Moira Curtain, M. C. “Terry” Hokenstad, Lynne Healy, Charles Robins, and Evelina Pangalangan (Philippines). Although major representation is limited to UN and UNICEF at the Headquarters Secretariat, IASSW has called on a succession of leading social work educators in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America to represent the interests of the profession at UN meetings and other events held on those continents.

IFSW Representation: From their home base in Geneva, Switzerland, Andrew Mouravieff-Apostol and Ellen Mouravieff-Apostol have directed the affairs of IFSW. They were particularly helpful in establishing a network of volunteers to serve as representatives at locations other than the Headquarters office in New York.

Jack Kamaiko, Lillian Lampkin, and Celia Weissman pioneered IFSW representation. Weissman, who was for many years the major voice for IFSW, deserves special credit for inaugurating UN Annual Social Work Day and fostering its growth. The current team in New York includes Michael Cronin as the main representative, assisted by David Roth, Robin Mama, Elaine Congress, and Marcia Wallace. The roster for other locations

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includes 10 representatives who are called on for assignment to UN offices and events in Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi.

Summation

This account of social work participation in the work of the UN is by no means complete. The focus on IASSW and IFSW stems from their joint partnership in Social Work Day at the UN. Other organizations with NGO consultative status, such as the International Council on Social Welfare, the World Federation of Mental Health, and the International Federation on Ageing, also are represented by social workers who participate

in a wide range of activities. In addition, IASSW and IFSW, through internship programs for social work students, have made certain that the profession will continue to contribute to the humanitarian and social justice mission of the UN. From 1994 to 2008 a total of 154 students have been assigned to supervised practice in various divisions of the UN and UNICEF.

Student participation in Social Work Day took on new significance in 2008



1947 greets 2008.

*We Were
All There
for One
Common
Purpose*

when, for the first time, IASSW and IFSW planned a day-long seminar on global social work prior to the UN conference. Held at Fordham University with some 300 students in attendance, this new initiative was deemed a great success and will probably become an added attraction to the Annual Social Work Day at the UN. The response of a student to the events here chronicled is perhaps a fitting way to end this account of a memorable event.

I was amazed at all the social workers from everywhere: students, MSWs, big and little wigs. It was inspiring and humbling. We, this huge throng of people, were all there for one common purpose: to bring light to the dark and a voice to the voiceless.

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