

Union Contributions to Labor Welfare Policy and Practice

Past, Present and Future

Edited by

**Paul A. Kurzman and
R. Paul Maiden**



Union Contributions to Labor Welfare Policy and Practice

This book focuses on the contributions of organized labor in the development and evolution of workplace human services in America and eight countries around the world. Beginning with an overview of labor-sponsored social service programs, it showcases the achievements by major trade unions in the arena of human services, from inception to present.

The textbook concludes with a summary chapter which conceptualizes and summarizes current achievements and forecasts the future role of the labor movement in the delivery of workplace human services in the United States and abroad. It will be of use to those involved in the labor movement as well as practitioners in the fields of social work, human services, and labor and industrial relations.

This book was previously published as a special issue of the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*.

Paul A. Kurzman is Professor of Social Work and Chair of the World of Work Specialization at the Hunter College School of Social Work and Professor of Social Welfare at the Graduate School & University Center of The City University of New York. He is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* and author of the recent 2008 entry on "Occupational Social Work" in the authoritative *Encyclopedia of Social Work*.

R. Paul Maiden is Vice Dean and Professor at the University of Southern California School of Social Work and Editor of the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*. He is also a faculty member in the Work & Life concentration and has spearheaded the development of USC's new MSW program in Military Social Work and Veterans Services. He has an extensive portfolio of domestic and international publications, presentations and consultations on a wide range of workplace human service issues.

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Notes on Contributors

Sheila H. Akabas, Ph.D. is Professor and Director of the Center for Social Policy and Practice in the Workplace at the Columbia University School of Social Work where she also is Chair of the World of Work Field of Practice. She has served as a consultant to corporations, trade unions, foundations, and nonprofit organizations in the areas of occupational social welfare, vocational rehabilitation, and disability management. She is an author of many leading books in the world of work arena and contributes to a wide variety of major scholarly publications. Professor Akabas holds a B.S. from Cornell University and M.B.A. and Ph.D. degrees from New York University. She can be reached at SA12@columbia.edu.

Tatsuru Akimoto, D.S.W. is a Professor in the Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences, Japan Women's University in Kanagawa, Japan, and a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Schools of Social Work. He has written widely in the area of labor and work, both in the United States and Japan, and is the editor of *Japan in the Passing Lane: An Insider's Account of Life in a Japanese Auto Factory*. Professor Akimoto has a degree in labor law from Tokyo Metropolitan University, an M.S.W. from Wayne State University, and a D.S.W. from The City University of New York. He can be reached at Takimoto@fc.jwu.ac.jp.

David Bargal, Ph.D. is the Gordon Brown Professor Emeritus at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Social Work in Israel* and an author of many scholarly articles and books, including *Social Work in Industry* and *Social Services in the Workplace*. His principal areas of research are occupational social work, intergroup relations, and the management of human resources in service organizations. Dr. Bargal holds B.S.W., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He can be reached at davandrut@gmail.com.

Soochan Choi, M.S.W., Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and Director of the Department of Social Welfare in the College of Social Sciences of Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea where he specializes in occupational social work. He also is Chief Director of the Korea Employee Assistance Professionals Association. Professor Choi holds a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. He can be reached at choisc@yonsei.ac.kr.

Rick Csiernik, Ph.D., R.S.W. is a Professor and Graduate Program Coordinator at the School of Social Work, King's University College, the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*. Professor Csiernik's research focuses primarily on occupational social work, employee assistance programming and the addictions. He holds a B.S.W. from McMaster University and M.S.W. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Toronto. He can be reached at rcsierni@uwo.ca.

Elizabeth Ann Danto, Ph.D., L.C.S.W. is Associate Professor and Chair of the Human Behavior in the Social Environment Sequence at the Hunter College School of Social Work, City University of New York, where she teaches in the M.S.W. and Ph.D. programs. Dr. Danto has a rich practice background, including service as Director of the New York Citywide Employee Assistance Program. She has written widely on employment, social justice, psychoanalysis, and access to mental health care. She holds an M.S.W. from Columbia University and a Ph.D. from New York University. She can be reached at edanto@hunter.cuny.edu.

Kenneth K. Dickinson, M.B.A. was the Ford Executive Director at the UAW-Ford National Programs Center. He worked collaboratively with Professor Lawrence Root at the University of Michigan School of Social Work on the joint labor management initiative described in this book. He can be reached at kkdickinso@aol.com.

John Gal, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is currently the Editor of the journal *Social Security*, heads the social welfare research team at the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, and chairs the Israel Social Policy Research Forum. His fields of interest include social policy in Israel and the link between religion and welfare. Recent books include studies on income maintenance and unemployment policy in Israel. Professor Gal holds a Master's Degree in Political Science from Tel Aviv University and Ph.D. in Social Policy from Hebrew University. He can be reached at msjgsw@mssc.huji.ac.il.

Lauren B. Gates, Ph.D. is Director of Research at the Center for Social Policy and Practice in the Workplace at the Columbia University School of Social Work. She is an expert in the development of computerized monitoring and evaluation systems for disability management, employee assistance and job maintenance programs. Dr. Gates has conducted field research in a variety of settings, including corporations, universities, and trade unions. She has a Master's Degree in Environmental Psychology from the University of Massachusetts and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in regional planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She can be reached at lbg13@columbia.edu.

Scott Harding, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Nancy Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work where he teaches courses on macro practice and social welfare policy. His scholarly interests also include social justice, labor and social work, militarism and globalization. Professor Harding holds a B.A. and M.S.W. from California State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Washington. He can be reached at scott.harding@uconn.edu.

Joseph Injodey, Ph.D. is a Professor of Social Work and Head of the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in Kerala, India where he has taught for over 17 years. His main areas of research include social group work, labour welfare and education. Dr. Injodey has conducted training in the fields of human resources, employee counseling, and crisis management in India and abroad. He holds an M.S.W. from the University of Madras and a Ph.D. from Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala.

Binoy Joseph, M.A., L.L.B. is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Management, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in Kerala, India where he has taught at the graduate level for the past 12 years. His areas of teaching and research include human resources, employee assistance, corporate social responsibility, and employee relations. He has received many research grants and is active as both a trainer and consultant in India and abroad. Mr. Joseph holds both a Master's Degree in Personnel Management & Industrial Relations and Bachelor's Degree in Law from Mahatma Gandhi University in India. He can be reached at binoyjoseph@rajagiri.edu.

Howard Karger, Ph.D. is Professor and Head of the School of Social Work and Human Services, Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. He is regarded as an international expert in the areas of social welfare policy, community development and trade unions. He is the author of many books, including *Social Workers and Labor Unions* and *American Social Welfare Policy*. Professor Karger holds an M.S. from the University of Wisconsin, an M.S.W. from the University of Minnesota, and a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. He can be reached at h.karger@uq.edu.au.

Bob Lonne, Ph.D. is Professor and Director of the Social Work and Human Service Department of the Faculty of Health at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. He has been a senior social worker at Children's Protection Services in Western Australia and is an expert in the areas of child welfare, community practice, work stress and job turnover in the human services. Professor Lonne has been a leader in the International Federation of Social Workers and currently is President of the Australian Association of Social Workers. He holds a B.S.W. and Ph.D. from the University of South Australia. He can be reached at b.lonne@qut.edu.au.

Jimmy K. W. Lui, M.S.W. currently is a Ph.D. student at Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Kowloon, Hong Kong, where he is conducting research on issues around poverty among Hong Kong adolescents. For the past 20 years, Mr. Lui has worked as a social worker in labor, youth and elderly service settings. He holds an M.S.W. degree from Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He can be reached at groundjay@gmail.com.

Christina Matz-Costa, M.S.W. is a Research Associate at the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College where she is in charge of data management and analysis for the Age and Generations Study and the National Study of Business Strategy and Workforce Development. Ms. Matz-Costa's research interests include employee engagement, work-family issues, and employer responses to the aging of the workforce. She received an M.S.W. from Boston College where she is currently a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of Social Work. She can be reached at matzch@bc.edu.

Sheila Menashe, L.C.S.W. was a member of the planning team that launched DC-37's Municipal Employees Legal Services Program (MELS) where she served as Director of Social Work Services from 1974-2007. Previously, she worked as Director of a neighborhood service center at Mobilization for Youth on New York's Lower East Side, and was on the faculty of the NYU School of Social Work. Ms. Menashe holds an M.S.W. from Columbia University. She taught part-time from 1995-2002 in the World of Work Field of Practice curriculum at the Columbia University School of Social Work. She can be reached at Sheilamenashe@hotmail.com

Marcie Pitt-Catsouphe, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Social Work and Director of the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College. Professor Pitt-Catsouphe was Co-Principal Investigator for the 2006 National Study of Business Strategy and Workforce Development and the 2007 Age and Generations Study. Her current work includes oversight of the 2009 Talent Management Study and 2010 international Generations of Talent Study. She was a founding co-editor of the journal *Community Work and Family* and co-editor of the 2006 text entitled *The Work-Family Handbook*. Dr. Pitt-Catsouphe holds an M.S.P. degree from Boston College and a Ph.D. from Boston University. She can be reached at pittcats@bc.edu.

Lawrence S. Root, Ph.D. is Professor of Social Work at the University of Michigan and was director of the University's Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations. Professor Root also has served as a director of the UAW-GM Educational Department Counseling Program and UAW-Ford Life Education Planning Program. His areas of research specialization include employee benefits, employment-based services, and labor-management collaboration. He holds an

M.S.W. from Bryn Mawr College and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He can be reached at lroot@umich.edu.

Jessica Rosenberg, Ph.D., L.C.S.W. is Associate Professor of Social Work at Long Island University and Director of LIU's GranCare Program which supports grandparents raising grandchildren. As a bilingual clinician, Professor Rosenberg worked for many years with New York's Latino community. Her research specializations include practice with immigrants, union-social work collaboration, and grandparent caregiving. She holds an M.S.W. from Hunter College and a Ph.D. from Yeshiva University. She can be reached at jessica.rosenberg@liu.edu.

Joelle Sano, Ph.D. is currently a visiting professor at the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Villanova University where she teaches in the area of social movements, labor, aging, social inequality, and education. Professor Sano's research presently involves examining the interactions of the U.S. labor movement, the Catholic Church, and mass media. She holds Master's and Ph.D. degrees in sociology from Boston College. She can be reached at joellesano@gmail.com.

Louise Simmons, Ph.D. is Associate Professor and Chair of Urban Issues in Social Work at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work where she teaches social welfare policy, community organization, and political advocacy. Her scholarly interests also include labor and social work, community-labor alliances, and contemporary urban issues. Professor Simmons holds an M.A. in Education from the University of Connecticut and a Ph.D. from M.I.T. in Urban and Regional Studies and Political Science. She can be reached at louise.simmons@uconn.edu.

Yoichi Sonoda, M.B.A. is a Professor in the Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Welfare, Tohoku Fukushi University, Sendai, Japan. His major research interest is labor welfare in an aging post-industrial society. Professor Sonoda has written books (in Japanese) on union welfare plans, medical services, and fringe benefit management. He holds an M.B.A. from Meiji University. He can be reached at sonoda@tfu.ac.jp.

Lourens S. Terblanche, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and Director of the EAP Sequence in the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, and a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health. Dr. Terblanche is currently President of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association of South Africa and is actively engaged in the promotion of EAPs through training, consultation, research and publication. He can be reached at lourie.terblanche@up.ac.za.

Joseph Tronolone, L.C.S.W. served as Assistant Director of Social Work Services at DC-37's Municipal Employees Legal Services Program from 1977-2007, and as Director from 2007-2008. Previously, he had been Director of Adult Services at

Hamilton-Madison Settlement House and a supervisor at Spence Chapin Services, both in New York. Mr. Tronolone holds an M.S.W. from the University of Michigan and currently is a volunteer with Literacy Partners. He can be reached at jtronono@verizon.net.

Ming-Sum Tsui, Ph.D., A.C.S.W. is Professor of Social Work and Director of the D.S.W. Program in the Department of Applied Social Sciences of the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Professor Tsui is a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*. He holds an M.S.W. from McGill University and a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and is the author most recently of *Social Work Supervision*. He can be reached at ssmstsui@polyu.edu.hk.

Raju Varghese, A.C.S.W., M.P.H., ED.D. is an Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Maryland at Baltimore. He is an expert on individual and family development, group dynamics, and intercultural relations. Professor Varghese holds an M.A. from Madras University, an M.S.W. from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.P.H. from Johns Hopkins University, and an Ed.D. from Temple University. He can be reached at rvarghes@ssw.umaryland.edu.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Paul A. Kurzman, PhD, ACSW, is the Associate Editor of the *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* and a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*. He is also a Professor at the Hunter College School of Social Work and at the Graduate School & University Center of The City University of New York where he teaches policy and practice in the MSW and PhD Programs and Chairs the World of Work Field of Practice Specialization. He has held major leadership positions in the National Association of Social Workers locally and nationally. Professor Kurzman has served as a consultant to many unions, and as Chairperson of the Hunter College Employee Assistance Program's Labor-Management Advisory Board for 26 years. Dr. Kurzman is the author of the entry entitled "Occupational Social Work" in the 20th edition of the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (2008) and an editor or author of eight books, including *Work and the Workplace* (with S. Akabas), *Psychosocial and Policy Issues in the World of Work*, *Work and Well-Being* (with S. Akabas), *Work, Workers and Work Organizations* (with S. Akabas), and *Labor and Industrial Settings: Sites for Social Work Practice* (with S. Akabas & N. Kolben). Professor Kurzman holds a BA from Princeton University, MSW from Columbia University and PhD from New York University. He can be reached at pkurzman@hunter.cuny.edu.

R. Paul Maiden, PhD, LCSW, is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health* and Vice-Dean and Professor at the University of Southern California's School of Social Work. Previously, he developed and directed the Occupational Social Work Program at the Jane Addams College of Social Work at University of Illinois – Chicago and was also Director of the School of Social Work at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. He is a recipient of Senior Fulbright Scholar Awards to Russia and South Africa. Dr. Maiden has been in the EAP field for 29 years and has an extensive portfolio of domestic and international publications, presentations and consultations on a wide range of workplace human service issues. He is an editor and contributing author of *Workplace Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management* (with R. Paul & C. Thompson), *The Older Worker and the Changing Labor Market* (with J. Gonyea), *The Integration of Employee Assistance, Work/Life & Wellness Services* (with M. Attridge & P. Herlihy), *EAPs in Higher Education*

(with S. Philips), *Accreditation of EAPs*, *Global Perspectives of Occupational Social Work*, *EAPs in the New South Africa* and *Total Quality Management in EAPs*. Dr. Maiden holds a BA from Angelo State University (TX), an MSSW from the University of Tennessee and PhD from the University of Maryland. He can be reached at rmaiden@usc.edu.

PREFACE

Some might say that this book, with its focus on the contributions of organized labor, is long overdue. And they would be right! Indeed, the labor movement, in America and abroad, has often been in the vanguard of the provision of human services to workers and their families, and in successful advocacy for progressive social change. Many of the policies and provisions that workers currently enjoy – even take for granted – are the direct outcome of the creative formulations of great unions and far-sighted union leaders. This book, *Union Contributions to Labor Welfare Policy and Practice: Past, Present and Future*, is an opportunity to tell this remarkable story.

The editors are deeply grateful to the staff of Routledge and the Taylor & Francis Group for their resolute support. Stephen Thompson, Routledge's Editor for Special Issues, has been consistently focused, helpful and supportive. Natasha Cahill, Production Editor, and Laura Sonnie, Production Manager at Taylor & Francis have excelled at their jobs, making our task all the easier. And above all, our appreciation beyond measure to the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health's* Manuscript Editor, Anschion E. Maiden (wife to one Paul, friend to the other) for her understated yet always extraordinary contributions at every turn and juncture.

On a very personal level, Paul Kurzman wishes to acknowledge a debt to his colleagues in the World of Work at Hunter College. In particular, he is grateful to Professors Florence Vigilante and Elizabeth Ann Danto for their many insights and unwavering commitment to this field of practice. He also wishes to express gratitude to his family for their support of his professional interests and commitments. His wife, Margaret Kurzman, children Katherine and David Kurzman, and grandchildren Jacob and Jenna Belabed, together are the irreplaceable complements to the satisfactions of meaningful work. As Sigmund Freud would remind us, life is all about the capacity to embrace both love and work.

Paul Maiden wishes to acknowledge the lifetime career contributions to the social work and social welfare labor movement by Dr. Sheila Akabas of Columbia University, Dr. Paul Kurzman of Hunter College and Dr. Larry Root of the University of Michigan. Their collective scholarship and contributions have

advanced the field ten-fold. They are indeed pioneers and mentors to many, and each has been a contributor to this volume. A very special thanks to my two “partners” who made this long intended volume a reality: Paul Kurzman, a wise and accomplished colleague and friend whose persistence and drive ensured that we would get to print, and my ever so patient and tolerant life partner in all things, Anschion, for her endless patience while editing, reformatting, proofreading and performing all the other mundane tasks that ensure the quality of this publication.

Paul A. Kurzman
R. Paul Maiden

August 2009

Introduction

Work... is about a search, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday thru Friday sort of dying. Perhaps immortality too is part of the quest.

Studs Terkel
Working

The evolution of workplace human services has reached the century mark with Work and Life programs as the latest iteration. Although substantially unrecognized and unacknowledged in the employee assistance literature, labor unions and their associated labor welfare services provided the impetus for the development of many of these programs dating back to Samuel Gompers's organizing work in the late 19th century in Chicago and other hubs of the industrial revolution.

This book presents the history and evolution as the conceptual backdrop for the origins of the programs and also identifies best practices in the development and delivery of labor welfare programs. In essence, it showcases some of the best initiatives and achievements by major trade unions, and scholars and practitioners in the labor welfare movement. The first section focuses on development in the United States. The second half addresses challenges and development in labor welfare from a global perspective.

The first chapter is authored by Dr. Paul A. Kurzman, Professor of Social Work and Chair of the World of Work as a Field of Practice and Specialization at Hunter College, The City University of New York. Kurzman is world renowned for his scholarship in the development of the field of industrial/occupational social work with a specific focus on social work practice in labor unions. Kurzman traces the long relationship shared by labor unions and social workers with worker advocacy as the common denominator. Kurzman also discusses a common ambivalence shared

by the two groups but also recognizes the collective accomplishments and contributions of both resulting from the reality of their mutual interests.

Howard Karger and Bob Lonne's chapter explores unionization from the perspective of a largely non-unionized social work profession. Their premise is that while social workers have been quite effective in organizing and advocating for other groups of workers, their ability to organize and unionize themselves has met with rather dismal results, a paradox that has contributed to economic stagnation and under-recognition as human service professionals. They conclude by offering a "hybrid" union model that would assist social workers to unionize, thus creating a potential *reversal of fortune* in their professional and economic standing.

Lawrence Root and Kenneth Dickinson's opening entry to Part 2 examines the first labor-management programs in the United States auto industry. They provide an in-depth analysis of the impact these endeavors have had on shaping workplace human services over the last half century. Auto worker labor-management programs were precedent setting in many ways. While initiated in the auto industry, these programs established a template and set a tone for cooperation and collaboration between labor and management with the common denominator being the health, social well-being and productivity of their workforce. The implementation of these joint labor-management programs also lead to establishment of the first national membership organization—the *Association of Labor-Management Administrators and Consultants on Alcoholism (ALMACA)*—which provided significant impetus for workplace human services in the U.S. As the field continued to evolve and mature, ALMACA also evolved. Now known as the *Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA)*, this international membership organization has had significant influence in promoting the global development of workplace human services.

Sheila Akabas, an international expert in workplace mental health and rehabilitation programs, and her colleague, Lauren Gates, both at Columbia University School of Social Work's Center for Social Policy and Practice in the Workplace, describe their work in connecting trade unions to the community as a means of promoting and sustaining employment for individuals with mental health conditions. It is noteworthy to mention that Professor Akabas and her colleagues at Columbia were some of the first to advocate for the development of rehabilitation and workplace support programs which fostered the employment of individuals with situational and chronic mental health conditions. The human and economic impact of their work has been substantial and has also led to employment opportunities for untold thousands of skilled individuals with mental health conditions. Their work over the decades has also led to the creation of employee disability support and management initiatives by employers in the public and private sector across the country.

Sheila Menashe and Joseph Tronolone explore the benefit and impact of a collaborative model of legal and social services developed by a major

union, with lawyers and social workers collaborating on service delivery and social policy. Further, they examine how their combined services have benefitted union membership. They also discuss some of the challenges faced in building such interdisciplinary collaboration, and highlight other initiatives that have resulted in a unique union-based program.

Louise Simmons and Scott Harding explore the advantages and leverage that can be developed among union members as a result of blending unionization efforts with community organization strategies. By integrating the economic needs of workers and the communities where they reside the authors suggest that employee wages can be maintained and that economic viability and healthier communities will be sustained.

Jessica Rosenberg examines both the historical and contemporary context of labor's contribution to workplace human services. She suggests strategies for future labor initiatives that would address the needs of older workers, female workers and an increasingly diverse workforce. While acknowledging the commonality of the goals she also examines the inherently tenuous relationships between labor and management which leads to ongoing mediation and negotiation to address the needs of these critical workplace populations.

In the final chapter of Part 2, focusing on the U.S. workforce, Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes, Joelle Sano, and Christina Matz-Costa, address aging workforce issues, and unions' responsiveness to the emerging needs of older members. The issues unions face in accommodating to the growing needs of older workers who remain in the workforce are examined as are the challenges faced by unions in balancing the demands they are facing with meeting the diverse and often very different needs of younger workers entering the workforce.

The second half of this book explores the development of labor welfare programs in eight countries on five continents across the globe: Canada, France, South Africa, Israel, India, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong.

Rick Csiernik, one of the leading Canadian scholars in the area of workplace human services, explores the evolution of Canadian workplace assistance programs across three distinct eras: Welfare capitalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, from the onset of the industrial revolution through the *Great Depression* of the 1930s; Occupational alcoholism programs of the 40s, 50s and 60s; and Employee Assistance Programs that have continued to evolve over the past four decades. Csiernik explores the notion that human service programs during the era of early welfare capitalism served as an employer control mechanism, whereas contemporary workplace assistance programs are seen as an employee benefit. In the context of the Canadian workforce, this evolutionary development has been driven in large part by organized labor.

Elizabeth Danto's work explores the development of labor welfare programs in France. She begins with an exploration of the history and

context of the French political culture and the early establishment of a centralized welfare state that is one of the characteristics of a socialist society. She then examines the roles and relationship between social workers and labor unions in the context of this social and political climate.

John Gal and David Bargal examine the evolution of labor welfare programs in Israel. They explore the link between change in the role of trade unions in the Israeli labor market over time and the nature of occupational welfare in this relatively young country. Gal and Bargal also provide an in-depth description of the Israeli occupational welfare programs on a continuum of legislatively mandated programs and non-mandated benefits and services.

Lourens Terblanche, Chair of the Employee Assistance Program specialization at the University of Pretoria, examines the development, or rather the lack thereof, of labor welfare services in South Africa. The context of this chapter is particularly interesting as it takes place within the timelines of an apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. During the apartheid era, labor unions were allied with the African National Congress and played a major role in bringing about significant societal, social and political change. These collective efforts helped to result in the demise of apartheid and the emergence of a democratically elected majority rule government accompanied by a plethora of new labor laws designed to protect the health, welfare and economic needs of the South African workforce.

Binoy Joseph, Joseph Injodey and Raju Varghese explore the evolution and development of workplace human services in one of the most densely populated countries on earth. India has a long, substantial and complex labor welfare history (dating back to the 1830s) that spans workplace issues related child labor, bonded labor, female labor, and occupational safety and health. The authors highlight the human services programs offered by some of India's largest private employers and describe the full range of programs offered by public sector employers and by public and private sector Indian trade unions.

Tatsuru Akimoto and Yōichi Sonoda provide a review of the emergence of unions in Japan, commonly referred to as *enterprise unions*. While an extensive range of benefits have been negotiated by unions and codified as part of collective bargaining agreements, Akimoto and Sonoda also identify additional human service programs developed by some unions that include services to the disabled, elderly workers, women and children, as well as programs of consultation, counseling and career development. It is interesting to note that Japanese labor unions are also expected to take a role as service providers. In essence, the range and scope of labor welfare services in Japan is distributed between the employer and the enterprise union.

Soochan Choi explores the development of workplace human services in South Korea. In the early period of labor welfare, employee cafeterias and dormitories for migrant workers, along with onsite health care services, were

the order of the day. As South Korea's economy burgeoned, leading to an increasingly stressful workplace, programs have expanded to respond to employees' substance abuse, mental health issues, and family problems. South Korean trade unions are now on the cusp of introducing members assistance programs.

In the final global labor welfare manuscript, Ming-sum Tsui and Jimmy K. W. Lui analyze labor welfare programs in Hong Kong. The authors provide an in-depth discussion of the political, economic, social and cultural issues and transitions facing one of the world's leading centers of trade and commerce. The authors also blend their experiences in the development of Hong Kong's workplace human service programs—one as director of the first employee assistance program established in Hong Kong and the other as a labor organizer and advocate of labor rights.

As Co-Editor, Paul Kurzman brings this book to a close with a succinct chapter on the future of trade unions and their human service (labor welfare) programs. Kurzman points out that while the percentage of unionized workers worldwide has declined over the last two decades, unionized workers as a whole maintain a better standard of living, receive better health care, have greater access to social services and have better pension plans than non-unionized workers. Despite the decline in size of labor unions, Kurzman suggests their continued importance in promoting distributive justice and their ongoing empowerment of workers to bring about progressive workplace and societal change. He also suggests an emerging rapprochement between social work (and sister human service professions) and the reinvigorated labor movement worldwide.

There is clear evidence that such change can be politically transformative, as seen with the Solidarity movement in Poland that effectively ended communism there, and the highly activist union movement in South Africa that helped bring an end to more than five decades of apartheid and political, economic and social oppression.

This book demonstrates the impact organized labor has had in advocating for employee rights and advancing the development of workplace human services. It is also clear that labor unions and labor welfare programs will continue to play an important role in the world of work and will remain critically important to securing humane workplaces across the globe in the decades to come.

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Labor–Social Work Collaboration: Current and Historical Perspectives

PAUL A. KURZMAN, PhD, ACSW

*School of Social Work, Hunter College, The City University of New York,
New York City, New York, USA*

Labor unions and the social work profession have a complicated history of closeness and distance, cooperation and confrontation, respect and caution. However, as both increasingly come under attack by conservative forces, it becomes clear that labor and social work share many common goals that can lead to mutually advantageous joint activities in the arenas of social service and social action. However, the often latent organizational symbiosis present needs to become manifest to establish the preconditions for such collaborative endeavors.

The most militant workers with whom I have to contend are the social service workers. They are the greatest militants in the world. They are going out on strike every Monday and Thursday, and you know why? Because nobody takes them seriously.

Victor Gotbaum, Executive Director,
District Council 37, AFSCME (1976)

INTRODUCTION

The occupational social work literature tends to see the workplace through the lens of the employing organization, viewing employers as the innovators of programs and the providers of services to employees and their families. As

an extension of the occupational social welfare benefit system that Titmuss (1968) proposed, these nonlegislatively mandated benefits and services are seen as the employer's grant of new entitlements to the workforce as a managerial initiative. However, there is a second lens through which occupational programs should be viewed, especially for the current 12.4% of the American labor force that is represented by a trade union.

This entry defines and describes the human services provided by unions to their members. Placed in historical perspective, these programs largely have evolved in the past 60 years; however, the antecedents of the emerging partnership between the labor movement and the social work profession date back to the Industrial Revolution and the turn of the 20th century (Kurzman, 2008). This review of the major human service programs under the auspices of labor unions explores the unfolding models, noting the similarities (and differences) to programs under the aegis of employers. The discussion concludes with a projection of future trends, based on forces in the world of work that are already in motion.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The relationship between social work and organized labor in the United States has been ambivalent, reflecting great fluctuations and changes over time. At the turn of the 20th century, social workers were seen as Lady Bountifuls, giving charity to working people, rather than fighting for social justice in the workplace. The assistance they gave to poor immigrant workers and their families came with large doses of advice and moral judgment. Also central to social work's stance was opposition to labor's central weapon, the strike, and a consistent refusal to side with labor's enmity toward strike-breakers, called "scabs." During the rampantly probusiness decade of the 1920s, social workers often were lured by industry to serve as "welfare secretaries," helping workers with personal and economic problems, but always as agents of employers. It was not lost on the union movement, of course, that the corporations most likely to hire welfare secretaries were those most solidly anti-union in policy and practice (Akabas & Kurzman, 1982).

In the 1930s, social work moved into the public sector because the voluntary agencies (supported largely by corporate dollars) could no longer fulfill the human and social needs of Americans during the Great Depression. No longer tied to private agencies (financed by welfare capitalism during the first two decades of the century), social workers settled into a closer relationship with the growing labor movement. With a new, public base of financial support, and a growing conviction that individual intervention had to give way to collective action and to systemic social change, the emerging social work profession found itself ideologically closer to organized labor. Prominent social workers, such as Jane Addams, supported the

garment workers in building their unions; Harry Hopkins sided with workers at every turn, seeing them (not the corporations) as America's heroes; and Harry Lurie led the National Conference on Social Welfare to support Roosevelt's New Deal, and the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively with their employers. As noted elsewhere (Kurzman, 1987, p. 902), social work "established a rapprochement with the trade union movement in the 1930s through active support of the Congress of Industrial Organizations' (CIO) organizing drives and through outreach to unemployed workers during the height of the Great Depression."

Prominent social work educators and practitioners, such as Grace Marcus, Mary Simkhovitch, Inabel Lindsay, and Wayne McMillen, began to support union activities actively and openly. Progressive social work journals, such as *Social Work Today* and *Survey Graphic*, published articles that were fiercely supportive of the growing trade union movement. Most important, social workers themselves were joining labor unions or organizing their own locals when none were present in the voluntary sector (Karger, 1989; Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 2006). Noted labor researcher Mary van Kleeck argued that social workers in trade unions would not only gain a voice in determining their own working conditions but also would be in a better position to increase the effectiveness of the labor movements' social programs (Reisch & Andrews, 2001; Tambor, 1995). Although professional social workers today belong to diverse unions, the majority are members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the American Federation of Government Employees, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. In fact, social workers today belong to unions (23.2%) in much greater proportion than workers in general (Akabas & Kurzman, 2005, p. 197).

In addition, occupational social workers have been providing direct services to members of labor unions and their families under union auspices since 1943. The pioneer social work service to merchant seamen who were members of the National Maritime Union was the first major commitment of the profession to a trade union as an employer and human service provider. Social work pioneer Bertha Reynolds' landmark work as project director of this 4-year member assistance program (MAP) set the stage for future collaborative ventures (Reynolds, 1951/1975). Notable among the programs that followed were the achievements of the social work research, rehabilitation, and service project led by Weiner and Akabas at the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America from 1964 to 1968; the development in 1971 of MAP and legal assistance programs at District Council 37 of the AFSCME; a social services program for active and retired members at the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU); personal service and member outreach programs at District 65 of the Distributive Workers of America; and a member

assistance program at the National Maritime Union (Akabas, Kurzman, & Kolben, 1979; Weiner, Akabas, & Sommer, 1973).

Although today's relationship is a mutually beneficial one, the inherently fragile nature of the link between organized labor and the social work profession cannot be ignored (Straussner & Phillips, 1988). Social workers work in corporate settings more frequently than in labor unions, and the interests and ideology of many social workers still are often more toward provision of social services than toward the creation of progressive social change (Karger, 1988; Kurzman, 2000).

THE LABOR SETTING

Fifty six of the independent and autonomous unions in the United States currently belong to a national federation called the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). Technically international in scope (in that some unions have members in Mexico and Canada as well), the national union structure most commonly is organized into locals, district councils, and state federations. Electing its own officers, each union local largely determines its policies and thereby forges its own destiny through the work of its staff in the day-by-day relationship with the employers for whom its members work. In addition, central labor councils frequently are formed in major cities so that the many union locals can have a collective influence on public policy and receive training and services for their staff (representatives and business agents) and volunteers (shop stewards and union counselors), which a central body usually can best provide. The AFL-CIO central office does considerable research, economic analysis, and lobbying in Washington, DC, on behalf of its member unions, focusing on issues such as work and family, safety and health, and retirement security. All the international unions and many of the locals and district councils manage semiautonomous health and welfare (pension and benefit) funds for their members. These funds frequently provide the auspices and financial support for occupational social work services to their members.

The AFL-CIO currently represents 10.5 million members, including 2 million members in Working America, its new community affiliate (www.aflcio.org/aboutus/faq). However, AFL-CIO membership numbers have declined because in 2005 several leading unions, including the SEIU, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, United Food and Commercial Workers, and UNITE-HERE (which represents hotel, restaurant, casino, and apparel workers), left the AFL-CIO, asserting it was too bureaucratic, and ineffective in organizing new work sites. Calling themselves the Change to Win Federation, the breakaway unions expanded to seven and now have more than 5 million members—approximately half the size of the AFL-CIO (Greenhouse, 2008, p. A-9). Although overall union membership in the United States has declined steadily over the past 50 years, down to just 12.4% of the labor force in 2008

(by contrast, it was 20% in 1983), a revitalized labor movement, sparked largely by organizing initiatives of Change to Win member unions, added 428,000 new members in 2008 to increase union membership in the nation to approximately 15.7 million (Freeman, 2008, p. D-2; “A Hopeful Year,” 2008, p. A-30).

RATIONALE FOR SERVICES

The landmark social work service programs at the National Maritime Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and District Council 37 (AFSCME) have been noted above. As successful as each program may have proved to be, what also is notable is the path they cut for similar programs, starting primarily in the 1970s. Not only did social work pioneers show skeptical observers that it could be done, they put forward a conceptualization of why their experiments had been successful. As Akabas (1977, p. 743) observed: “When the benefits of labor organization are available to all workers, either through collective bargaining or through employers’ unilateral efforts to avoid organization, some new enticement must be offered to achieve union membership growth and loyalty.”

Having won as many financial gains in wages and benefits as they could, the unions needed to create new services to maintain the loyalty of their members and leaders. Although wages and working conditions would always remain the central labor agenda, there was a perceived need for both “bread *and* roses” (Meltzer, 1991). Members were not looking for charity but, in Samuel Gompers’ term, for “advocates” who would help them achieve a greater measure of social justice (Livesay, 1993).

In this spirit, unions in major industrial centers, with a historically strong and progressive labor tradition, have been the most responsive to workplace human service programs. In Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Seattle unions expressed interest and began programs to serve active and retired members. A partial list of labor unions that employ professional social workers today in such programs includes AFSCME; United Automobile Workers Union; Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union; American Federation of Musicians; Sheet Metal Workers Union; District 1199, United Health Care Workers East; the International Brotherhood of Teamsters; and the SEIU.

In addition to maintaining the loyalty of members to their leaders, labor-based human service programs have proved helpful to union staff in protecting members’ jobs. Before such programs were instituted, a union grievance representative often felt helpless at an arbitration hearing against management’s detailed documentation of a troubled member’s repeated absenteeism, lateness, drinking, or declining job performance. However, when a trained social worker on the staff of the union’s MAP can attest to the presence of a health or mental health problem, and make a professional

commitment to oversee appropriate individual or group treatment, management's arguments for immediate dismissal may be tempered by the union's guarantee to provide or supervise the necessary care. When a labor leader institutes such an occupational program that helps to protect a member's job, member loyalty is likely to follow.

RANGE OF SERVICES

In keeping with the themes of protecting members' jobs and providing an additional membership benefit, labor-sponsored programs have blended advocacy with the provision of services. Recognizing the complexity of managing as an individual or, more commonly, as a family, union-based service programs have focused on linking members to hard-to-find entitlements, providing short-term on-site personal social services, and removing the stigma associated with accepting help. Hard-to-find entitlements include the many government benefits to which working (and retired) people may be entitled but of which they may be unaware or unable to negotiate on their own. Personal services include, in Kamerman and Kahn's (1976) terms, public and private social utilities and individual and family case services. Negotiating the fragmented and often transient public and voluntary community service arrangements is a skill that human service professionals bring that is of great value to a membership organization. Going well beyond information and referral, professional staff usually have the capacity to form firm links with public benefit programs and voluntary service providers. Equally important, workplace behavioral health care workers have the expertise to provide specialized and emergency services in-house, including individual and group counseling for substance abuse, disability management, and mental health care (Akabas et al., 1979; Kurzman, 1992; Maiden, 2001).

The range of services that labor-based social service professionals provide is impressive by any measure (Kurzman, 1992). Given the centrality of alcohol and drug abuse, many either have credentials (or their equivalent) as alcoholism and drug counselors or supervise certified substance abuse counselors who have this specialized expertise. They provide constructive confrontation to members in denial, a differential chemical-dependence assessment (using the CAGE Questionnaire and the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test [MAST]), referral (if appropriate) for detoxification, links to 12-step programs, ongoing supervision of rehabilitation services and aftercare, job protection while the member is in treatment or on disability, and preparation for reentry to the workplace (Molloy et al., 1980). They bring expert knowledge of the member's fringe-benefit package, the union's collective bargaining agreement, and provisions of key statutes such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, and Mental Health Employment Parity Act of 1996.

Earning too much to qualify for Medicaid-covered services, but too little to pay for services in the marketplace, union members often find themselves without mental health care when they need it. Therefore, the provision of counseling for members with recurring personal and emotional problems is a treasured service. Free, confidential, and on-site—and offered by labor-sensitive, licensed mental health providers—such individual and group services would be prohibitively costly for many union members, even if they could find them in the community (Akabas & Kurzman, 1982).

Labor-sponsored mental health care has grown to become an important social work service, in part from the discoveries of Weiner and Akabas in their landmark study from 1964 to 1968 in the unionized garment industry. They found that union members could be maintained at work, despite serious mental illness, provided that appropriate professional mental health and rehabilitation services were available. They also demonstrated that a working population would use this service if the professional staff would focus intervention on real-world “here-and-now” issues and offered short-term models of service (Weiner et al., 1973). Today, the delivery of task-centered “brief-treatment” mental health care is a central component of many union-based occupational social work programs (Greene, 2008).

In a similar vein, social workers, rehabilitation counselors, and public health nurses have begun to play a significant role in the arenas of occupational safety and health and disability management. The organization of sectors of the industrial work force into labor unions led to specific collective bargaining provisions in the area of safety and health before federal regulations (Straussner & Phillips, 1988). Working with labor-management teams as sponsors and employer or union medical departments as referral agents, occupational social workers have provided these services. The passage of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970 gave labor a statutory framework on which the enforcement of standards could be based (through the regulatory functions of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the U. S. Department of Labor) and collaborative research could be conducted (through scientific investigations of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services). Union advocacy has been a significant impetus for ensuring that a reluctant federal government maintains these minimum standards and conducts the research it is authorized to oversee on behalf of working people. As numerous observers have noted, social work’s presence here in particular has made a difference (Balgopal & Nofz, 1989; Lewis, 1989; Needleman, 1986; Shanker, 1983).

Similar initiatives have been taken to serve disabled carpenters and electricians under the auspices of the AFL-CIO’s Human Resources Development Institute. Helping members with short-term disabilities maintain their connection to the labor force and providing a placement program for those who may have dropped out have been major achievements of the AFL-CIO

program. Moreover, in collaboration with union health and security plans, Columbia University School of Social Work's Center for Social Policy and Practice in the Workplace has demonstrated that a labor union's welfare and benefit program may be one of the best places for early access to newly disabled workers (Krauskopf & Akabas, 1988). A pilot project, in collaboration with the largest trade union in New York City, showed that early intervention and systems sensitivity fit well with the philosophy of the union and the pragmatic needs of its newly disabled members (Akabas, Fine, & Yasser, 1982). Indeed, a partnership in the arena of disability management between human service professionals and labor may hold a key to members' successful return to work following the onset of a disability (Akabas & Gates, 1993; Akabas, Gates, & Galvin, 1992).

Opportunities to serve retired workers and to sponsor preretirement planning workshops for members in mid- and late career have also been fertile ground for labor-based services. The union leadership has a stake in its senior and retired members because often they built the union, supported its leaders, and may continue to vote when they retire. These members may also be organized as an active force on behalf of the union's political and social welfare agenda. Retired members tend to be grateful for their union's continued and skillful expression of caring and often return the favor in loyalty and volunteer services (Gonyea & Maiden, 2008; Habib & Gutwill, 1985; Monk, 1990; Safford, 1988; Stuen & Worden, 1993; True & Wineman, 1989; Wineman, 1990).

MODELS OF SERVICE

Two forms of services for workers and their families have been occurring in union settings over at least the past 30 years. On the one hand, much of the help that workers have been giving to fellow workers, formally and informally, for as long as the labor movement has been in existence has been organized and formalized in recent years. On the other hand, occupational social workers, with professional expertise, have also come to be service providers in many of the progressive union settings just discussed. All too often, however, they have passed each other in the corridors of labor like ships in the night.

In particular, the achievements of occupational social workers, as noted, have been built on the creative conceptualizations and documented achievements of professional pioneers at such settings as the National Maritime Union, the Drug, Hospital and Health Care Employees Union, AFSCME, and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union. Social work's commitment to advocacy for clients and progressive social change has made it a natural ally of labor in pursuit of the goals of social justice. Unions look to social workers to cultivate an advocacy capacity for their members within the social service system—a system to which they pay taxes, as wage earners, and to

which they make generous United Way contributions, through voluntary deductions from their paychecks.

In addition to sharing many values in common, social work's increasing respect for union members' capacity to cope with difficult personal and organizational dilemmas fortuitously came at a time when many social workers were beginning to embrace a more cause-and-effect social functioning practice perspective (Donovan, Kurzman, & Rotman, 1993). Social workers came to see that people's needs represent problems in living, rather than personality disturbances. Thus, help should be matched to the problem as the worker chooses to define it (Germain & Gitterman, 1996), and the services should be provided at the "crossroads of life," rather than at a social agency uptown (Meyer, 1976; Reynolds, 1951/1975). Hence, the emphasis ought not to be on workers' pathology but rather on their strengths.

However, a large number of labor unions have urged that the peer-outreach model be promoted as an alternative. Whereas the motivation for this latter model may be partly pragmatic (peer counselors are volunteers, not salaried staff), part of the preference is inherent in the ideology of the labor movement. Historically, union "brothers" and "sisters" have helped each other in time of need in a spirit of fellowship and solidarity. Peer outreach and counseling is a logical extension of this principle and is syntonetic with the essence of union folkways and culture (Allen, Chapin, Keller, & Hill, 1979; Antoniades, 1984).

Peer outreach and counseling programs have been successful in many union settings. Pilots, teachers, flight attendants, garment workers, locomotive engineers, and merchant seamen have used this paradigm effectively under the auspices of their specific unions, reporting wide acceptance of this mutual aid design by labor and management and high levels of utilization. The model has worked particularly well in reaching out to members who are dealing with alcohol and drug abuse problems, because peer-support and mutual aid principles intersect with the use of 12-step helping programs (Antoniades & Bellinger, 1983; Gardner, 1988; Molloy et al., 1980; Reynolds, 1963; Silverman, Simon, & Woodrow, 1991).

Indeed, mutual aid is a preferred theme in most of the labor movement, which has long approached "outside experts" with some degree of caution. Just as important, research on the effectiveness of peer intervention has been encouraging, leading one observer to conclude that "peer intervention is an understudied area holding enormous promise for occupational programming" in the future (Molloy, 1989, p. 336). Such findings may account, in part, for why professionally staffed MAPs are not more widespread today in labor settings.

CONCLUSION

As Root (2000, p. 15) perceptively noted, "Despite their declining proportion, organized labor continues to be a significant part of the social and economic