

# Introduction

## ***The Canadian Review of Social Policy at a Crossroads***

Several major problems have arisen for the *Review*. First, the *Review* has had difficulty increasing the numbers of subscriptions beyond its historic high of 400. However 400 does not provide sufficient funds to cover the costs of production. Current subscription revenue covers about one third of revenue. Second, the *Review* has faced increasing expenditures like many small publications. Efforts are being made and will continue to reduce expenditures, but they cannot be brought down sufficiently to reach break even under present conditions. Third, the *Review* has not had the material coming to it that it needs and should be receiving. In the last several years the Working Group and the *Review's* staff have put in considerable effort to recruit contributors and materials.

Fourth, the *Review* does not have a reference group to assist in building a larger subscription base. Since its founding the *Review* has been produced by an independent editorial team with no connection to any association. It was founded as a newsletter to be circulated among members of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW) who met at the annual meetings in 1976. It has not had any connection with the CASSW since then. From this humble beginning the newsletter, produced at the University of Regina, progressed through several stages until in 1984 it acquired a Board of Directors and a more polished professional look. By 1988 it had become an academic journal with a few hundred subscribers and a section for referred articles. While it still has a national advisory board, it is in need of a reference group that will play an active role in solving the *Review's* problems.

Fifth, the *Review* does not have external funding. During the 1980s the *Review* was partially supported by the Welfare Grants Section of the Ministry of Health and Welfare through the Social Administration Research Unit of the University of Regina. In the early 1990s when *CRSP* moved to Ottawa it obtained independent funding from Welfare Grants. But with the termination of that program in 1994 it lost its core funding. The Employability and Social Partnerships program of the federal Ministry of Human Resources Development that succeeded Welfare Grants is not mandated to provide core funding to projects like the *Review*.

The *Review* needs renewal: an infusion of new subscriptions, external cash, more material, and a more active board.

## **The Social Policy Conference**

For the last ten years the biannual Social Policy Conference has been a major venue for discussion of social policy issues in Canada. Originating at the University of Calgary in the early 1980s, it was revived by a Toronto-based

organizing committee as a national meeting with an open call for papers. The first reformed conference, with a committee made up of several *Review* Board members, was held in October 1989 at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Since that time meetings have been held in 1991 at Bishop's University, in 1993 at Memorial University in St. Johns, in 1995 in Vancouver, and in 1997 at the University of Regina. The 1999 meetings will take place in Montreal.

Since the conference left the University of Calgary it has not had a permanent home nor any guarantee of continuity. The staff of Welfare Grants and later Social and Community Partnerships Branch of Human Resources Development Canada have played an important role in assuring continuity. But as the role of the Branch changes and the activities inherited from Welfare Grants fall away they are not likely to be in a position to continue this role. The organizing teams from each city have played a role in trying to ensure that a new site is found for the next conference. But it is likely time to establish a permanent secretariat to ensure the continuity of the conference.

Early Social Policy Conferences led to the publication of a single book with additional material available for the *Review*. More recently with multiple books resulting from the conferences, the *Review* is not receiving the material that it should.

Can the problems of the *Review* and the Conference be solved in a way that would bring them together so that two important institutions in the social policy field in Canada could support each other and together survive? Each needs a method of ensuring that it is responsible to the field, that it has continuity and financial viability.

So here is a proposal for solving the problems outlined above. With the agreement of the Montreal Conference Organizing Committee, time has been set aside at the Montreal meetings on Wednesday afternoon, June 23, 1999, to discuss this proposal. We hope that you will consider attending this meeting and supporting this call for the establishment of an Association. We welcome commentary on this proposal. Please write or email us in the next few months before the meetings.

## **A Proposal for the Canadian Review of Social Policy and the Biannual Social Policy Conference**

### **1. Social Policy Association/Association de politique social**

Establish a Canadian Social Policy Association/Association de politique social, a membership body to be founded at the Montreal Biannual Social Policy Conference. The Association would elect its own governing council at the Biannual Social Policy Conference.

### **2. Biannual Meetings of the Association**

The Association would have a business meeting at the Biannual Social Policy Conference. The Governing Council would be obligated to present a biannual report and a funding report.

### **3. Governing Council**

The Association would elect a governing council of 10 that would have responsibility for both the Biannual Social Policy Conference and for the *Canadian Review of Social Policy*. The Governing Council would ensure that a venue is selected and an Organizing Committee is established for subsequent conferences. The Governing Council would also be responsible for appointing an Advisory Committee and an Editorial Working Group for the *Canadian Review of Social Policy*.

### **4. Membership in the Association**

Membership in the Association would be both individual and organizational. The members of the Association would establish the membership fee. A portion of registration fees for the Biannual Social Policy Conference would be put towards membership in the Social Policy Association. Membership would be for a two-year period. Members could also join at any time.

### **5. *The Canadian Review of Social Policy***

A portion of the Conference fee would be directed to a subscription to the *Canadian Review of Social Policy/Revue canadienne de politique sociale*. Papers and presentations from the Biannual Conference would be directed to the review for potential publication either in a special volume of proceedings or in the *Review* itself. This would help to ensure the viability of the *Review* and solve the problems noted above. Nonetheless the *Review* will still have to make some difficult decisions about how to proceed towards ensuring that revenues match expenditures.

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