

**Report of the Executive Officer  
Submitted by Thomas C. Hood**

The Society for the Study of Social Problems has had a good year in taking care of business. The Society contributes to the professional and lay community through our publications. SOCIAL PROBLEMS is our flagship publication. The year included completing the evaluation of bids for publishing SOCIAL PROBLEMS for the next five years. The finalists (University of California Press, Blackwell Publishing, and Taylor & Francis) were interviewed last year in Chicago. After the meeting they responded to additional questions. Blackwell Publishing received further consideration. The University of California revised its bid. Peter Conrad, Ron Troyer and I believe that we have signed a strong contract with the University of California Press that will financially benefit the Society. The conduct of the bidding process was done at a deliberate pace so that we could carefully consider the nature of each bid. If you have not read our contract with the University of California Press, please do. Once again we learned that the strength of the journal attracted bids from at least seven publishers. Some bids were very sketchy. The quality of the Blackwell Publishing and the Taylor and Francis bids suggest that they should be asked to bid again when the new contract approaches a renewal or cancellation point. The journals division of the University of California Press is smaller and must form relationships with other firms to provide comparable services to large commercial publishers. The committee believes that choosing to stay with a non-profit publisher fits the philosophical position of SSSP and will not hurt the marketing of our journal. We do recognize that a publisher with substantial international presence in terms of journals and offices located in several countries around the world might be better positioned to promote subscriptions to SOCIAL PROBLEMS as a global journal. The changes in our subscription base and in the electronic use of the journal should be watched carefully. The selection of an Editor for SOCIAL PROBLEMS is always a very important decision. We commend Jim Holstein securing top-notch manuscripts dealing with contemporary problems. Each member should encourage researchers to submit their work to the journal.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS FORUM: THE SSSP NEWSLETTER is an important contribution not only to the on-going tasks of the organization but also to promoting scholarship and critical discussion within the organization. The initiative being taken to follow up on Bob Perrucci's proposal to provide a publication to contribute to the debate in presidential election years is very important as well. The year has brought several contracts with Rowman and Littlefield to publish the initial volumes in the Presidential Series. The first two volumes are due out shortly. Several more are in the pipeline. Our hope is that these volumes will be widely used in classrooms across the country. These volumes featuring articles printed in our journal will offer an additional source of income to the Society as well as giving greater exposure to the best of our scholarship in specific social problem areas. Five volumes are under contract at present.

When I take the long view of the mission of our Society, I believe that many of us contribute to dealing with social problems through their identification, careful research on the nature of the problem, and possible clues to the problem's solution. The widest possible dissemination of scholarly work on social problems is one of our most important tasks as an organization. Professionally and personally we have to act as advocates to get the larger society to recognize that a problem exists given the inertia and even active resistance to change in the institutions of any society. My hope is that the members of SSSP never lose the advocacy edge.

Three strong scholar advocates, who served as Presidents of SSSP, died during the last year. I personally experienced the leadership of Helena Znaniacki Lopata and Beth Hess. I knew Lewis A. Coser only through his scholarly work. Helena convinced me that I should be Treasurer of the Society at a time when I was busy with other activities. Beth demonstrated leadership in many positions over the years and inspired me with her pursuit of justice for more than one concern. The legacy of people like these is their example of quality scholarship persistent in its pursuit of social justice in a world where many of the downtrodden do not have the means to speak for themselves or to recognize the means of their oppression.

During these economic times with very tight budgets in many sectors of higher education, our traditional membership base may feel that they cannot afford to spend part of their money to belong to our Society. Belonging to our Society rewards membership by: (1) providing a subscriptions to SOCIAL PROBLEMS and the newsletter, (2) membership in some special problems divisions which may or may not be active depending upon the current leadership, (3) a reduced registration rate for the annual meeting. Should we be surprised that we have a significant amount of membership turnover and have been showing a decline in membership? We are defined as a very student friendly organization, but do we keep those students who become members because they have found an organization that they can believe in---or do they just add a line to their resume and then exit. We need to pass on the spirit of our founders to a new generation of members so that they will become the scholar-advocates for their generation. We need to do a better job finding the scholar advocates and encouraging their membership either through a more attractive dues structure for those who find our dues too high or through providing more services for their membership dollar through greater activity in the special problems divisions. Several years ago someone proposed list serves for each special problems division. Such list serves should be staffed and monitored by a member of each different division. If others feel that is a good idea, I would appreciate assistance in recruiting persons who could monitor a list serve for each of the Special Problems Divisions. Suggestions for other ways in which the Executive Office could make membership in the Society more attractive would be appreciated as well.

I trust that at least some of you have visited our improved and relocated web site. We appreciate comments, suggestions and criticisms as we try to improve the Society's presence on the web. Since moving to the new host our site has received 58,866 hits. When you visit the site, please make note of what we maintain there. Write to us or email us. Tell us about any difficulties you experienced. Give us suggestions for linkages to other sites and/or other materials that you believe should be maintained on the SSSP web pages.

Once again through the hard work of many people we have an excellent annual meeting program. We appreciate additional support for the program from Arizona State University. We appreciate the grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation through Georgia State University to benefit the program session, "Universities and Communities: Partnerships for Justice and Social Change." One of the benefits of membership in the Society is participation in the Annual Meeting. Given that the internet has made informal discussion about common scholarly and mundane topics convenient and often helpful that aspect of participation in Annual meetings may be less appealing than it was once. Still the benefit of public presentation and critique of one's scholarship is always challenging and exciting. The special events scheduled at this year's annual meeting provide additional attractions. Our book exhibit will remain strong if the number of orders made through the book exhibit increases. Please consider ordering at least one book through the exhibit.

The questions that linger with me are “Should we continue to subsidize the cost of the annual meeting from other income of the Society?” or “Should the Registration Fees and other revenue collected at the annual meeting cover the full cost of the annual meeting?” In 2002, we collected \$38,546 for the annual meeting and we spent \$51,726 on the annual meeting for a deficit in that activity of \$13,180. We have taken the governance activity costs out of the annual meeting budget. This type of deficit in holding an annual meeting has been typical for a long time. We have argued that low registration costs encourages more attendance. While I pay registration every year like every other member, I recognize that registration for the annual meeting is really a small percentage of the cost of attending. I leave you with the continuing question, “Should the annual meeting be subsidized or pay for itself?”

I have asked the Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee to consider the definition of the role of the Executive Officer in SSSP. As I indicated in my report last year, I plan to take Professor Emeritus status at the University of Tennessee effective July 1, 2004. This does not change the possibility of running a contract for operating the Executive Office under my supervision at the University of Tennessee Department of Sociology as we have done since 1991. However, it does change the amount of compensation needed for the Executive Officer in the sense of fringe benefits and released time for courses. I have presented several options to the committee to consider and anticipate that they will make a recommendation to the Board on how to proceed. Let me say here that the relationship between the Department, the University and the Society has been viewed as mutually beneficial and we would be happy to continue the relationship in some form should the Society wish to continue. For my own part, I shall be happy to continue to work with and for the Society in whatever capacity the Board and membership approve. I continue to enjoy my service to the Society and have the support of my family in my work with the Society.

I cannot express enough appreciation for the work of Ronald Troyer who has served us well for eight years as Treasurer in spite of a full schedule of activities in his various positions during that time of Department Head, Dean and Provost at Drake University. Ron has contributed in many ways to the Society throughout the years through his work as Vice President, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor and Member of the Budget, Finance and Audit Committee. Ron leaves the position as Treasurer this year, but as a life member we know that his interest in the Society will continue.

Michele Smith Koontz has continued her outstanding work as Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager. I am sure each of you will want to thank Michele for her excellent attention to detail and her thoughtfulness. Her increased knowledge of the Society and its traditions and her skill in dealing with the many and varied persons who populate SSSP make possible some of the options I have suggested to the Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee. Nancy Brannon has served faithfully in learning new and varied tasks, including the transition from the old to the new web site. We are looking forward to working with Nancy another year as she continues her residency and studies for her doctoral program in Sociology.

May we continue to work together to move the Society for the Study of Social Problems forward in achieving its current goals and in setting new ones.