

The Report of the Executive Officer

I am happy to report that the Executive Office seems to be functioning as well as at any time during the period that I have served as Executive Officer. The results of the Presidency of Claire Renzetti seem particularly good. Thank you, Claire! The committees of the Society have worked well, completed their assignments, and have made recommendations for the Board to consider. You have received a packet of information and the news is good. Even though Susan Carlson is stepping down as Treasurer of the Society, the Budget Finance and Audit Committee has asked her to continue to advise them on the management of investments and Susan has agreed to work with the Committee in this capacity.

Once again I am happy to report that Michele Smith Koontz and our new Graduate Research Associate, Mary Walker have made the operation of the Executive Office a pleasant experience. This year Michele and Mary have worked as well together as any other team that we have had. Mary brought with her substantial computer experience that has enabled her to service and update materials on the web site very efficiently. I anticipate this working relationship will continue next year as Mary continues work on her Masters degree in the Department of Sociology.

With the receipt of the bequest from estate of Joseph Gitler, which will likely be received during the next twelve months, the Society has the opportunity to structure a new award very much in keeping with its philosophy, but broadly limited by the terms of the bequest. In addition a long-term member and Past President has approached me about endowing another award. Currently, we have two Society wide awards that are given by special committees—the Lee Founders Award and the C. Wright Mills Award. Some professional societies less diverse than ours have overall award committees to provide oversight on society award programs. As the Board considers the receipt of endowments for particular award purposes—do we need to have a committee that provides thoughtful consideration of the establishment of award programs? An appropriate action by the Board would be to charge a standing committee or appoint a special committee to prepare full specification for the Joseph Gitler Award and/or other awards that might be proposed in the near future.

The Executive Office is prepared to move to electronic balloting should the Board authorize it and should the membership approve a revision of the bylaws. A close review of the elections section of the bylaws revealed that no specific stipulation that officer elections for the Society must be done by mail. However, the bylaws stipulate that division elections, special issues submitted to the membership and amendments to the bylaws must be done by mail. In addition a review of the election section revealed that the provision for circulating to all members a list of candidates who have agreed to run for positions in advance of the ballot (with time allowed for nomination by petition before preparation of the final ballot) has not been practiced for some time. An appropriate action by the Board, if desired, is to propose an amendment that makes required changes in all sections of the bylaws necessary to enable electronic balloting.

The Special Problems Divisions are a very important part of this Society. Pamela Roby undertook the task of editing the booklet, "Working Toward A Just World: Visions, Experiences and Challenges." This set of short essays received a strong positive reception when it was printed in 1997. Each of the special problems divisions had a brief essay that addressed four questions:

1. What is your vision of a just world in relations to your division's mission?
2. What are one or two demonstration projects, nations, or states that have most effectively addressed your division's mission at any time in history and what are/were their important features?
3. What are the key difficulties that you and other working toward your division's mission face in your work toward a better world?
4. What are five to ten key articles or books you would recommend to SSSP colleagues and their students who work outside of your Division's area but want to learn more about it?

In addition to new research, publications and change in the areas of study covered by the divisions active at that time, the Society has added three new special problems divisions: Teaching Social Problems; Global; and Institutional Ethnography. Psychiatric Sociology has changed its name to Mental Health. All of the other divisions remain, making a total of twenty special problems divisions. Unless the Society wishes to assign the project elsewhere I would like to undertake the task of getting the current division chairs or someone designated by their division to prepare updated or new responses to the four questions and to have the booklet available as a PDF file on the SSSP web site by the 2007 annual meeting. Updating such a booklet each ten years provides an opportunity for a Division to take a look at itself in light of the scholarly endeavors and activist projects in its area. Of course making the booklet an electronic file should enable more regular revision. An appropriate action by the Board, if desired, would be to endorse this project.

The site visit from the Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee went very well and the two University of Tennessee representatives strongly supported continuing the relationship with the University of Tennessee. Since the last visit, the University has become more stable with a new President of the University of Tennessee system, a new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and a new head of the Department of Sociology. I am happy to report that Professor R. Scott Frey, Department Head, has expressed support for the Executive Office and a desire to see the office remain in the Department of Sociology after I step down as Executive Officer. During the site visit, I told the committee chaired by Nancy Jurik that should the Society wish and should my health continue to be good, I would be willing to serve as Executive Officer until 2009. This date will put us through the next contract negotiations for the publication of SOCIAL PROBLEMS. As you know, our journal is considered very desirable and we can expect several major publishers to be interested in bidding on the contract.

I have been able to do more writing during the past year and am looking forward to bringing some of those projects to completion. I appreciate the opportunity to continue to serve as Executive Officer and will be happy to continue to serve in that capacity next year should you desire that I do so.