

## 2008 Report of the Executive Officer

This year has been an eventful one with a number of significant changes. A dues increase was passed. Revisions to the bylaws have been passed. A half-time person has been added to the staff of the Executive Office as an Administrative Assistant and Webmaster for the Society. Michele Koontz, Sarah Hendricks, Sharon Shumaker are clearly a most efficient and delightful staff for the Executive Office. Their presence almost makes me sad to leave the position. Note that I said almost. Ginger and I still have travel plans. Activities for church, 4-H leaders, retiree associations and other volunteer work as well as writing consume time previously devoted to teaching. For my birthday this year, our son gave me a blank book with the instructions to fill it with the stories that I told them when they were children about the Indian, Big Foot Wampum, the pirate, One-eyed Pegleg Hooligan, and Sniffy, the wood elf with the foot long nose. As all of you know, allowing my imagination to turn to fantasy rather than ways to make SSSP a better organization or new ways to increase the membership would divide my mind and so I welcome the fact that we have a search well under way to determine a new Executive Officer.

This is not to say that I don't feel that a number of challenges remain. The report of the follow-up on the planning retreat leaves the organization with a number of initiatives to prioritize and implement. The drop in membership from the high for the meetings in New York suggests that work on membership promotion is a priority. The journal, SOCIAL PROBLEMS, continues to show up among the very top journals in our field but as consortium subscriptions increase and electronic distribution continues to grow, I wonder if this will eventually lead to a change in how journals compete for readership.

Clearly the communication function of an annual meeting has changed. The Internet allows easy communication among scholars who share research agendas and may even be working in each other's areas. While the Internet does not substitute for face-to-face communication, the fact that much information exchange has already taken place and will continue makes an annual meeting an opportunity for sociability as well as scholarship. Since many attendees may have to use some of their own income in order to attend the meeting, limited budgets may turn the trip into a combined business and pleasure trip. Future meetings may have to reflect this in planning the schedule and supported activities. Skill workshops, workshops on funding exhibits of helpful teaching and research resources may offer justification for the expense of attending the meeting. I am clear that the function of attending a meeting for a scholar from a Research One institution or for a textbook writer is different than the function of attending a meeting for an employee of a non-profit community based organization or the faculty member of a four year liberal arts college with less than 1000 students. Would our annual meetings have any appeal for a person teaching in a community college unless they themselves were involved in the production of scholarship and/or teaching materials---as was our late- President Beth Hess? Still the opportunity to think about how our scholarship may help to influence policy in both minor and major ways is a task that we commit to when we pursue social justice.

During my tenure as Executive Officer I have sought to make the Executive Office an enabling institution that carries out the directions of the Officers of the Society and the Board of Directors. Further I have tried to encourage the stance that the Society for the Study of Social Problems belongs to the membership. First and foremost, I believe that the members of the Society who are willing to vote should set the direction for the Society. I hope that the new Executive Officer recognizes that cardinal principle of democracy in a voluntary association. Second, I believe that the Society should allocate its resources using a budget to the activities and actions that sustain the Society. Note that the persons in the Executive Office who do the most day-to-day work get the highest salaries from the Society. My hope is that the Society will continue to recognize the task of meeting management as a separate and demanding set of work that may be performed by someone other than the Administrative Officer but may be assigned to the administrative officer as long as the compensation for the meeting management tasks is kept within the Annual Meeting budget. When I joined the Budget, Finance and Audit Committee nearly 30 years ago, I asked how much does an Annual Meeting cost? I was told that the costs of the annual meeting were so spread out across different sections of the budget that it would be virtually impossible to separate the costs of the annual meeting from the costs of other activities. For planning purposes, a budget must use categories that accurately reflect the activities of the Society. This conceptual work is very important. Several years ago we noted that the governance activities associated with the work of the Society that take place at the annual meeting were included in the cost of the annual meeting. These activities must take place whether we have an annual meeting or not. They now appear as a separate category in the budget. Let me mention one more challenge. Special Problems Divisions are very important in our Society. While they are easy to form, a division can be difficult to terminate when they become inactive. This is a topic that needs attention by the Council of the Special Problems Divisions. Since a petition is necessary to begin a division, perhaps a petition challenging the right of a division to continue would be a way to bring a vote by the membership on whether or not a division should be allowed to continue to share in the resources of the Society.

The work of the Executive Officer as a liaison between the host institution and the Society is important but need not be time consuming. The model that we have used at the University of Tennessee follows the grants and contracts model found in a number of Research One institutions. When I took on the position as Executive Officer, I had already served as project director on research grants and contracts. This made me familiar with the process and knowledgeable of what the University might find easy to support and what they might find hard to support. The category of overhead in an independent research organization rather than a university is extremely important to the survival of the organization. In a public university with teaching, research and service missions, contract overhead may be a source of money to fund activities that otherwise would not be funded. This puts a university in the position of being able to charge less overhead or even to waive the overhead if they find the work of the contractor meritorious or reflecting positively on the reputation of the institution. The Society has enjoyed strong support during our time at the University of Tennessee. Visits from the Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee have provided the opportunity to make sure administrators about the achievements of the Society. The

Permanent Organization and Strategic Planning Committee's report on the site visit points out - The University values the relationship with SSSP. Personally I believe that the fact that the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences is serving as incoming President of the American Chemical Society (the world's largest professional society) does not hurt the attitude within the college toward the support of well-recognized professional organizations, like our Society.

Allow me a brief word about Executive Officer compensation. Currently the compensation is around \$535/per month. This covers expenses of driving into the University and paying for parking and other expenses associated with the position. My philosophy has been that the Executive Officer position should be at least in part a volunteer position. The Board should recognize that as additional expectations are placed on the Executive Officer occupants of the position might not wish to treat the position in this fashion. When I retired in 2004, I no longer needed released time from teaching to tend to duties for the Society. The compensation that I received for released time was paid to the Department but was not always used to hire a replacement but sometimes for other Department expenses. Operating budgets for Departments at the University of Tennessee seldom fund all the operating expenses of Departments, so recoveries are necessary to cover needed expenditures. These recoveries may be realized through overhead on research or other contracts. In the contract with SSSP, the overhead normally added to the contract was waived throughout the length of the contract. When I retired, the University desired the Society to pay the full stipend for the Graduate Assistant. We used the summer stipend for the Executive Officer to assist in making this transition from one where the University had contributed the bulk of the stipend. As the Society moves to a new Executive Officer possibly with enhanced duties, more resources may be required to compensate the Executive Officer. I am assuming that a new contract will have to be written with the new Executive Officer as Project Director or similar title on the contract with the host institution. We were assured during the 2008 site visit that existing contract arrangements may be kept in place until the end of my term at the end of the 2009 Annual Meeting.

I want to commend the officers and the Board for an excellent year following an outstanding planning retreat. I believe that SSSP is in good hands and look forward to aiding in the transition to a new Executive Officer by the end of the 2009 Annual Meeting. Whoever is chosen by the Board to fill that position can count on my full support and assistance during the transition period (and after if requested) to limits of my time and ability. I have had and expect to continue to have in the remainder of my term an excellent experience as Executive Officer. I have worked with many talented and accomplished professional teacher scholars to advance the cause of an outstanding professional organization. Still I look forward to making my final report as Executive Officer at the meeting in 2009. Thank you once again for your support and for allowing me to serve in this capacity.

Tom Hood, Executive Officer