

Report: Social Action Committee

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Chair, Social Action Committee

August 1, 2016

The Social Action Committee was asked by the Executive Committee to select an issue and to identify and organize a social action for the 2016 Society for the Study Problems Annual Meetings. First, I must apologize to my exceptional Committee members and to the SSSP Executive Committee for not making better use of them in identifying and organizing a social action for the 2016 meetings. I urge future Vice-Presidents to act in conjunction with their committee in selecting a social action. Further, let me thank Michele Koontz both for her patience and her assistance in implementing our organization's social action.

The Social Action "Committee" has invited several individuals central to bringing the Fair Trade movement to participate at the 2016 annual meetings. Seattle has been one of the first cities to initiate Fair Trade as an issue in the United States. So, both given the theme of the SSSP program as well meeting in Seattle, it seemed appropriate to bring this issue and those who work on it to these meetings. It also seemed "safe" to organize a social action that would occur internal to the meetings.

Fair Trade representatives will participate in two ways. First, a session on Fair Trade has been organized for Friday at 12:30. It will include a discussion of how to run and how to volunteer for Fair Trade Organizations—in this case, for Ten Thousand Villages. It will also include a discussion by a group that disseminates a newsletter on this issue, as well as a discussion of the negative impact of the TTP on Fair Trade. I urge those here today to advertise this session. Second, the Executive Director of Seattle's Ten Thousand Villages has paid for and **will set up a table with Fair Trade products** for the duration of the meetings. Most products can be easily packed in a suitcase! SSSP members can also pick up a brochure that identifies Fair Trade organizations throughout the U.S.

As Chair of the Social Action Committee, based on my experience, I want to as the Executive Committee to address two issues:

First, the Social Action Committee was established during the last few minutes of the final meeting of the 2015 Executive Committee. That left no time for a committee meeting during the 2015 meetings. I think that, in the future, the Executive Committee use a different procedure for selecting the Committee.

Second, it would be both useful and “democratic” for the Executive Committee to define what constitutes an acceptable “social action.” For example, at first, I was going to work with the Social Action Committee to organize a “public” action--say, for example, on the environment, broadly defined. I do not consider simply organizing a session, sessions, or teach-in(s) on a social issue to be a “social action,” although others may. On the other hand, organizing a public action with Seattle-based advocacy groups would have been extremely time consuming and could lead to excluding some advocacy groups or inadvertently intervene in local complexities that might exist among the advocacy organizations.

It also carries an impact on our organization. To take such an action would, I believe, at the least, require approval from the Executive Committee. It also might require approval from the membership at the business meeting. If that is the case, then the Vice-President elect would have to work with the Social Action Committee a year in advance.

Thus, it seemed that, for this first year, the Social Action issue that was selected would occur internally and would involve groups that were easily identified and who work cooperatively on their issue. Fair Trade met those criteria.