# Norma Parker Address

Delivered by Grace Vaughan in 1983 at the 18th National AASW Conference in Sydney

## Politik or perish

> And generally, let every student of nature take this as a rule—that whatever the mind seizes and dwells upon with peculiar satisfaction is to be held in suspicion—and so much more care is to be taken in dealing with such questions to keep the understanding even and clear. Francis Bacon
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> Discontent is the flame that burns the dross of satisfaction. Krishnamurti

The widespread neo-conservatism that has accompanied, and increased with, the economic trough of recent years should convince social workers of the essential need for acquiring and using political skills. The disparity between the haves and the have-nots on most indices of social stratification can be seen as one explanation of the growing intolerance towards the recipients of welfare resources and those on the borderline. Another, and probably more basic reason, may be the headlong, almost hedonistic pursuit of individualism evident in this half of the twentieth century, which seems to be to the detriment of the 'whole'. The philosophy of collectivism may need to be sold if we are to escape from posterity's accusation that our generation put the finishing touches to the 'irresponsible' society.

When the theme for this conference was first mooted, it was to be 'Economics and Welfare' and while the final title is what it is, the basic ingredients remain—but with an action-orientated emphasis rather than the theoretical one suggested by the original. As those of you who are members of the Association and read your local branch newsletter know, the International Federation of Social Workers at its Executive Meeting in 1981 issued a statement on social welfare and neo-conservatism that:

> ... noted the continued deterioration of economic and social conditions in most countries and the detrimental impact on the living standards and social

> welfare of millions of people. Inflation, unemployment, health and education problems and unequal distribution of wealth are rapidly increasing throughout the world. We view with alarm the growing tendency to attack and reject the concept of the welfare system foundation for the social security of people, the cutting of social services, the reduction of individual purchasing power and the increasing transfer of social welfare to military expenditures. We warn that such actions deny the reality of intensified social and individual problems and the dangers of antisocial and violent behaviour. We reject the current economic philosophies that attempt to solve national and international system and structural problems through measures that penalise those least able to bear the burdens. Such regression can only have eventual disastrous results. The Federation calls upon all Governments to defend and advance the achievements of social services and social progress.

A Regional Expert Meeting, organised by the European Centre for Social Welfare Training and Research, in co-operation with the United Nations' European Social Development Programme, was held in Baden, Austria, in September 1981 with the title of 'The Consequences of the Economic Crisis for the Present and Future Development of Social Welfare'. The meeting issued the following conclusions:

1. As the Welfare system faces at present both a social and financial crisis, all demands for legitimation and wise utilization of social welfare expenditures must be met in a most serious way, since an obvious result of the present crisis is an intensified competition for resources in society.
2. In a number of countries the social welfare system is threatened by a conflict in values. The emphasis on material acquisition and rewards, the priorities given to power and profit, compete with the view that the primary purpose of a society is to assure that the basic needs of its people are met. Choices are being made by some governments which may be to the detriment of these social values.
3. It should be recognised that through health services, continuation of income during unemployment and old age and many other programmes, the social welfare system serves all people and not only the disadvantaged. When the integrity of these programmes is

threatened, as it is at present, the well-being of all is endangered.

4. The Group stressed the international interdependence amongst nations in the modern world. Considering the facts that economic and social policies as well as welfare expenditures affect international competitiveness, there exists a strong need for concerted international action. At the Asian Region Seminar, the keynote speaker stressed this international interdependence, using as social examples the Filipino-Australian bride trade and the use of prostitutes in Bangkok and other Asian cities by Australian men. Condemnation by Australians of these practices by exercising tactics of shame and accusations of exploitation could bring an end to them.

   The strength of the Peace Movement in the World is largely hidden from Australia. Measures including professional association world membership can be effective in strengthening international interdependence and recognition of the telling effects of the actions of individuals and groups and the politics of government in one nation on the rest.

5. The Group stressed the general interdependence between economic and social policies and especially the fact that a close relationship exists between the success or failure of employment policies and the level of demands made on the welfare system. There can be no successful social policy without employment policy.
6. The Group unanimously put priority on paid employment for all. That should be the basic goal for policy makers, as work is still the major legitimating ground for personal worth and income distribution in our societies. Thus, new ways of distributing paid work in a more equal way and other ways of reorganising work will become necessary.
7. As all social problems cannot be solved with employment policies, however, societies must achieve a comprehensive social welfare policy. The Group stressed the need to combine the efforts at all levels of such a system, including government, social service agencies, self help organisations, families and individuals. In this

context, governments and social agencies have a responsibility to promote and support self help.

8. The Group stressed the inordinate burden which is placed upon women in the present system. This burden is likely to increase in times of crisis. A more equitable allocation of such burdens between the sexes is to be pursued through a variety of policies.
9. Finally, the Group stressed the need for detailed research prior to the implementation of any fundamental policy changes. Better information, including the results of comparative research and of exchanges at the international level, are also needed to ensure an integrated and consistent system of social welfare policies, as well as for evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and policies.

Following these points, the Regional Expert Meeting then went on to deliberate in detail on matters related to the theme. Among these deliberations was a call for a redefinition of work:

> New recognition should be given to the essential nature of unpaid work in the family and in the community. Such work is necessary if society is to function properly. New means should be found to give such work status, recognition and reward.

So we can see from this that ideas for reform and the pursuit of social justice abound internationally, and social workers whose duties range wider than the other caring professions, have a serious responsibility in this regard. The issue of 'legitimation and wise utilization of social welfare expenditures' needs urgent attention and that attention should be demonstrated by those who see social welfare as a societal necessity. Only by such demonstration to those who at present do not see social welfare as a positive factor in the stability and improvement of society, but rather see it as an encouragement of social deviance, can we begin to change the trend towards intolerance and the current hardening of attitudes. We must recognise that there is an increasing emphasis on material acquisition and reward seeking by both individuals and corporate bodies, and that this competes with the view that the primary purpose of a society is to assure that the basic needs of its members are met.

The universality of social welfare payments through health services, tax concessions, subsidies, age programs etc., is often ignored while emphasis is placed on the people who

are deeply disadvantaged. But this group use a much smaller proportion of the total welfare bill than is generally recognised.

Similarly the interdependence of social and all other policies in our society is not sufficiently understood—welfare should be seen as people 'faring well' and not just tacked on to other societal necessities to salve consciences, or avoid unpleasant scenes or placate international disapproval. While it may be said that the social welfare of the people is implicit in the arrangements for all the institutional areas seen as essential for societal survival, it should be explicitly included in that list which is basically social organisation arranged for reproduction, socialisation, law and order, production, distribution and exchange of goods and services, and the maintenance of a sense of purpose. That inclusion is necessary because of the interdependence of all these areas and of the interdependence of policies aimed at achieving satisfactory arrangements for them, so that emphasis will be placed by all sections of society on the need to have a comprehensive welfare policy. The importance of this should be obvious to those who witness at firsthand the results of inappropriate, unsatisfactory arrangements.

It is at best, simply not good enough for social workers or anyone else, to concentrate on the perfecting, or the perfunctory completion, of the job in hand without looking at the environment of the particular system in which one is functioning, or at the systems that regard one's own system as an environment. At worst, it is purely a waste of time, talent and energy, in that action in another environment or system, either now, in the past, or in the future, can negate what appears to be an achievement in one's own system. In our technologically advanced society the efficiency of societal arrangements is being adversely affected because the complexities of the pluralistic life lead to an alienation and reluctance to be involved in the 'whole' so that a sense of self worth is mostly maintained by the pursuit of efficiency and excellence in isolation. Thus the administration and organisation of the whole, of the gestalt, is—for the most part—avoided by the most talented and able. However, at this conference we are concerned in our consideration of the social welfare system with the economic and the political systems.

Speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Group for the Adancement of Doctoral Education in Philadelphia last October, the philanthropist, Samuel J. Silberman, emphasised the importance of social workers and economists getting together. He called for a synergism between financial and human resources which in the past, and at present, have regarded each other as hostile and have looked to the government for partnership, rather than to each other. 'In the past,' he said, 'social planners designed programs with little or no

concern for the economic consequences. Today, economic planners are designing programs with little or no concern for the social consequences.' Mr Silberman sees social and economic planners as constant while the government is fickle and inconstant, a poor partner responding to the ever changing moods of the electorate. Thus planners must act together to advise the government and until this is done, they will both fail. An expanded role for social work says Silberman, will require confidence on the part of the public in the quality of the profession and its services. To gain this confidence a new strain must be developed that can prosper in a different environment. Such a strain for social work would require qualities and strengths that can assist those in our society who find it difficult to cope and, at the same time, influence their environments on the basis of benefit for both—rather than one at the expense of the other. In Mr Silberman's words, 'more common good, less Robin Hood.'

Silberman's exhortation for the introduction of a radical strain in social work contrasts sharply with the admonition of Robert Pinker in his *An alternative view*, that social workers should 'know their place' when he says: 'Social work ought to be preventive with respect to the needs which come to its attention; it has neither the capacity, the resources nor the mandate to go looking for needs in the community at large.' While allowing for the possibility of over-reaction as Pinker's *An alternative view* was written in the context of the major British so-called Barclay report, *Social workers, their roles and tasks*, we can see how divided the profession is on this matter and it is perhaps significant to observe that the conservative view is put forward by a leading social work educator and the progressive one by a philanthropist-field worker.

Pinker's somewhat black and white approach to social work is exemplified in his advice to social workers that they are not justified in switching the focus of social work from personal to political objectives just because they find numerous examples of misery and injustice in the course of their work. He says,

> Social workers already have at their disposal the normal channels of communication and influence in their agencies through which to get a better deal for their clients, and they have their professional associations through which to inform public opinion about the shortcomings of social policy.

This brings us to the matter of the definition of political activities because Pinker does not explain how social workers can channel their political activities in the ways suggested and remain unaffected in their practice. It can be argued that—and this was put forward in the

1977 Norma Parker Address—no action, or lack of it, is without its political aspects. 'Retreat, defend or assail' was the way in which the matter of the involvements of social workers in the influencing of public policy was put to you then.

An example of the effectiveness of the 'assail' method is recounted here from my memories of my life as a female parliamentarian. The Western Australian Houses of Parliament were built in two stages. The first was erected in 1904 when women parliamentarians were unheard off so no women's toilets were included. However, when the second stage was completed in 1964 such accommodation was included in what was, for the most part, the area for members' offices, a long way from the two Houses and even further from the dining room and the bar—in between which two facilities was the area known as the 'Corridor', a sort of elongated lounge room at each end of which were 'Gentlemen's Cloak Rooms' of enormous size. I requested that one of these be designated for women, but this was rejected firstly by the President and Speaker and then by the Joint House Committee of which I was a member and where I had done some lobbying and cajoling and rational arguing. I decided to take direct action by ignoring the 'Gentlemen's' on the brass plate on the loo door and using the toilets whenever I needed, and often when I didn't just to attract attention. My efforts, which were viewed with amusement by male colleagues who often stood guard over the door while I was inside in order to avoid embarrassment to other males, finally paid off when the 'guard' at the door refused admission to the President who was horrified to learn that this had been my practice for some time. Needless to say the next meeting of the Joint House Committee passed my oft-rejected resolution without comment and there is now a women's toilet, complete with brass plate, at the end of the 'Corridor'—a tribute to the principles of 'direct action' over 'normal channels'.

There are many definitions of 'politics'. The one which appears most apt for our purposes is that of David Easton: 'The study of the authoritative allocation of values as it is influenced by the distribution and use of power.' This definition is apt because it incorporates what we all know we mean by 'politics' and that is the essential inclusion of the concept of 'power' in any discussion or definition of political activity.

While it is easy to conclude that political activity is more likely to be present in the lives of social workers than in other occupations because of the ever present pressures of factors bringing about problems in the lives of individuals, families and communities, it is also easy to analyse why there is not much political activity amongst social workers, at least of the 'assailing' kind. Social work is a relatively new profession and therefore not accustomed to change in the way that the older professions may be. In our groping towards the goal of

professional recognition, our professional development has been retarded. Trying to define the social work role has prevented the definition and execution of work that would make that role obvious and acceptable as 'professional' by the community. Those with whom we work; those in need; those at risk; and those attending to specific aspects of those needs or risks, whether professional or voluntary, colleagues or family, friends, neighbours and other resource people—in addition to the environment in which we work—will determine whether, from within our status as social workers, we behave as counsellors, facilitators, advocates, sounding boards, advisers or information givers. These people and environments will, along with our individual personalities and experiences, also set boundaries within which we can lead, assist, observe or just make clucking noises. They also help us to set our horizons and emphases by the influence one or some or all of them have on us in terms of time and space e.g. the recent period of pre-election campaigns, the change of government and examination of new policies causes us to think more about political systems and how we can contribute to them or gain from them in our work.

Given that we are a relatively new profession with comparatively little experience in adapting to change we have certainly had plenty! Within the last century during which social work has grown rapidly as a profession in terms of both numbers of practitioners and academic training, the areas of social organisation in which our profession engages itself have changed profoundly. Family services are foremost, the care of the aged, disabled, the young, the ill, single parents—yet family size has diminished and its membership disintegrated as job opportunities incur moves to towns, cities and countries far from the family's origin. Australian society has done little to compensate for this in its feeble attempts at community development. Social workers know at first hand of this, but largely attempt to solve the resulting problems by demanding more professional or formal voluntary organisational help plus government intervention and funding, that is, by stretching the existing resources rather than looking at the need to substitute unused neighbourhood and other informal resources for the loss of quantitative family support. The quality of this support has not diminished, the family is just not there in sufficient numbers to do the job of providing support in an increasingly complex world. Further, the use of informal resource people frequently involves people who need to be needed, thus solving a problem by the use of a potential problem, and the use of organisations which have the potential to be community contributors in more than the one purpose area to which they have been limited. Laksiri Jayasuriya in an article in *Australian Rehabilitation Review*, 'Role of the voluntary sector in the 80s' has this to say:

> If we are to face up to the demanding challenges in the welfare sector during the 1980s, all segments of the welfare community must be prepared to think afresh and put under critical scrutiny some of the hoary myths and orthodoxies of yesterday ... the voluntary sector ... should be prepared to rationalise and co-ordinate its services even if this were to mean a curtailment and total closure, if not a redirection of its current activities.

There have been great changes in the composition and style of the family as well as in its reduced size and increased mobility. De facto and sequential marriages, blended families and group living have presented unfamiliar situations to be coped with by those who are often steeped in traditional modes and find it hard to look favourably on alternative life styles. In an article in *New Society* (7 August 1980, pp. 259-262) called 'The family and the welfare state', Muriel Nissel asks whether there is really any way that the family can take on more responsibilities again, while Adam Graycar has shown the impractability of this in his paper delivered to the International Federation of Social Workers' Symposium in Brighton last year.

In her article Nissel puts forward an interesting proposition in regard to the family's sharing of responsibilities in its relations with the welfare state by suggesting the emergence of a family self-service economy whereby the family as a unit begins to fulfil a more important economic function again. She suggests a 'Home Responsibility Payment' lessening the need for both husband and wife to work, or for one of them to work excessively long hours for extra pay:

> If working hours became shorter, or if part time working hours were more accepted for both men and women, both sexes would have more chance to share tasks (pleasant and unpleasant) within the home. There would be more time for both to attend to the needs of the more dependent members. Some of these things might well happen by the end of the century. The household is certainly doing more things for itself and others in the community. Men are already participating more in household activities and are putting a higher value on what might be pejoratively described as 'only housework'.
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> At the same time, women in the house are becoming more valued, because they are less often around at the beck and call of the rest of the family. The significance of these activities could be all the more important if unemployment continues to rise.

> Maybe before the end of the century those who still have the political and economic power which jobs in the formal economy can give, will be trying to persuade us that the 'unemployed' are not lazy scroungers, costing millions of pounds in social security, but respected leisured people with time to make a positive contribution of millions of pounds to the quality of life. The 'informal economy' could be a way to allow productive activities to flourish, and allow people to pursue their own interests on a small scale, which would not be viable otherwise, with present wage and tax rates. Caring for people is part of this informal economy. More and more people are recognizing that much of the paid work they do in the formal economy is neither interesting in itself, nor particularly useful or relevant to society. They are looking for alternative outlets for their creative needs, and an alternative source of the meaning which work can help to give life. This is where hope lies for greater involvement by the family in responsibilities which the welfare state has taken on.

While this proposition put forward by Nissel may be open to much criticism in that it will require massive attitudinal changes, it points not only to an alternative to present caring methods but also puts a chink in that hoary old imperative, the 'work ethic'.

Changes in health and education have seen vastly improved scientific and technological services, but social injustices and physical disadvantages continue. The lower the socio-economic status, the more likely to be physically and mentally ill and the less likely to seek early treatment. The lower on the indices of income, sex (male, female and gay in descending order), colour, residential area, residence type, health, ethnic origin, and so on, the less likely to proceed beyond secondary school or indeed complete it and further more, free tertiary education has been shown *not* to have decreased the likelihood of those from privileged strata being disproportionately overrepresented at that level. Despite an increase in white collar crime, the same correlation applies in imprisonment, especially in Western Australia on the index of colour—the proportion of black to white prisoners, especially as regards females, being extremely high.

In our work we see other injustices of the legal–political kind for which we have taken little or no reformist action. Legal aid as we know it may be different in form from the Chamber Magistrate, and the Public Defender of the past, but few social workers are satisfied with it. Recently in Perth an alleged rapist came before the court unrepresented because the Legal Aid Service, faced with inadequate funding, decided on priorities which favoured those who had a fair chance of being acquitted.

Another anecdote from my parliamentary experiences will serve to illustrate some of the complexities of bringing about legislative change in the pursuit of social justice. There were many facets to the objective of having passed a bill to revise the Western Australian Criminal Code so that house servants (male) could, in private, pursue their sexual preferences without being subject to 14 years and a whipping. One facet was for use of the organisations of homosexuals and their supporters. One evening I was speaking to a large meeting of members of these organisations and other interested individuals. It had been a long hard day and the hour was late, the meeting being the third I had attended that evening. I had explained at length the progress made and had advised them on what moves and what constraints I expected from them. I sank exhausted into my seat and then somewhat relevantly asked the Chairman if I should call for questions and comments, he nodded, so I struggled to my feet and said, 'Are there any queries?' There was a burst of such laughter—they almost rolled on the floor and were further amused by my obvious discomfiture. This levity and my demonstration of imperfection did much to draw us closer in the campaign.

Shelter has long been a basic necessity for which society has organised and there have been dramatic improvements in hygiene and safety in the home, but housing is an area where social workers meet frequent and often insurmountable difficulties in providing a service because housing is less likely to be available to those who are relatively resourceless. The tenants' ability to pay and their reputations will determine tenancy, not need, whether in welfare housing or private rental.

In the socialisation process, we are now in the period of the electronic brainwashing of adults and children alike—more adults and more ideas may be influencing the thinking of children than before the advent of television, but the communication is one way, the emotional and other exchange is missing. Orphanages and their concomitant evils are gone but the comfort, and often luxury, of the children's new villages and foster homes is surely a very costly but cowardly substitute for preventive care, support, advice and funding to problem families.

The manner in which we organise the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services has changed so dramatically and impressively that it has pushed the economic institutional areas into even more prominence than did the Rise of Capitalism or the Industrial Revolution. Even Marxists and Socialists among social workers see economic

growth as an absolutely necessary adjunct to improved social welfare. Those of us who try are too easily deflected from the pursuit of social justice and even human survival, by arguments about shortages of funds and allegations of ignorance in economic matters in our profession.

Society needs for its other necessities to be met in a competent way to maintain in its members a sense of purpose. There must be reasons for rearing children competently, for obeying laws, for being educated, for looking after health, for producing goods and services, for co-operating to ensure survival and development—in fact for keeping the social contract. There have been great changes in communication and transport that have affected our understanding of the essentially collective nature of human society. The trend towards individualism and privatisation has, among other things, tended to mean that those people who are already advantaged have been able to bring pressure and influence on decision-makers. There has been an upsurge in resentment at public funds being distributed to the less resourceful and or the handicapped. This phenomenon is what I have earlier in this paper described as 'neo-conservatism'. It may be a truism but cannot be said too often in the midst of our cult of individualism that man is a member of a species that cannot survive unless its members are organised into groups and societies which develop culture to meet shared needs. Controlled experiments in sensory deprivation and knowledge of acts of individualism such as solo yachting performances support the postulation that there is no individual unless it is the individual in society. For those individuals who denigrate the findings of modern social scientists, Plato in *Crito* wrote: 'Individuals realise themselves in society, they become developed beings only in, and through, their relations with others, owing to society their existence, nurture, friendships, their opportunities, their all.' Again Plato says,

> in a complex and civilised society, the satisfaction of all of each individual's basic needs requires collaboration and cooperation ... we give up some of our identity as autonomous individuals in exchange for the identity we receive from the group.

Psychiatrist, Anthony Starr says,

> We have grown so used to thinking of independence as a desirable goal that we may easily misconstrue it ... no human being is, in my view, self-sufficient. If such a creature as a self-sufficient human being existed, he would no longer possess those characteristics which we call human and indeed could scarcely be said to exist as a personality.

In comparable language John Donne affirms his belief in the fundamental bond between one man and another, the link which attests our sharing of the human condition when he says,

> No man is an iland, intire of itselfe, every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the Maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Manor of thy friends or of theire owne were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.

So ancients and moderns agree with Starr that, 'we are all inescapably members of one another, and no one can achieve independence and maturity in isolation from his fellows.'

The critical problem is how man can remain an individual in society. The problem can never be phrased as individual *or* society, individual *versus* society, or even as individual *and* society. Whether man expresses his own basic personality or the pattern imposed upon him by the society, whether he is a conformist or an independent will inevitably and simultaneously reflect his uniqueness *and* his collectiveness. The paradox of modern man is that only as the individual joins with his fellows in groups and organisations can he hope to control the political, economic and social forces that threaten his individual freedom. Only as the individual *in* society struggles to preserve his individuality in common cause with his fellows can he hope to remain an individual. As Chinoy says, 'He needs culture for the socialization which enables him to survive and culture exists only within a society, and society cannot exist without culture.'

The changes referred to in this paper may have been instrumental in almost imperceptibly segregating us one from the other, but we should remember that man himself makes the rules by which he lives and the determination of the quality of life rests with us. There needs to be an effort to change those rules and that determination by a conscious effort to overcome the insidious growth of individualism to the detriment of the collective.

The problems, occasioned by change and by attitude, that are facing Australian social workers are common to others in other countries, although their emphasis and size may vary. All over the world social workers are recognising the uselessness of pursuing remedial measures when the political processes are continuing to create the same and new aggravations to the justice and stability of society.

'Politick or perish' is not only a cry to warn our profession that it is currently being overwhelmed by those who know how to use the political system at all levels, but a cry to society to actively create a responsible society. It is too late for a rescue operation to save our society from the title 'irresponsible' predicted by Richard Titmuss—we need now to pull down the irresponsible and create the responsible society. As we need to build purposively a community network to complement and/or substitute for the family support system, so in the wider context of the social system we need to influence decision-making from the miniscule to the grand and to effectively make inputs not only to social policy but also—recognising the place of our profession and social welfare in the scheme of things—to ensure that policies made in other directions and in other systems do not curtail and bring disequilibrium to the whole society. This exhortation for a holistic approach is not just for social welfare purposes, segregation from and expedient use of resources and information from the wider environment is not only irresponsible, but unprofessional. We do not need to go into the intricacies of General Systems Theory to understand that our impact upon society through action of however weak a kind within our own system is going to alter not only our immediate environment but also other systems which are environment to the components of our system and thus to the whole social system and its environment.

Perhaps we need more often to examine our own personal philosophy as it affects our professional behaviour. Are we too often taking a pathological approach, seeing the system in which we operate as different, necessarily separate, because it contains a greater degree than normal of dealing with social problems, rather than a normative approach observing the relatively smooth way in which society, as it organises itself, is functioning. The latter approach might help us to see the effect we have on, as well as ways in which we can contribute, to the whole social system—academically we should be favoured to be able to see this. Our training is based on social, organisational and behavioural sciences and if we refuse to recognise this effect, then what of those who are trained in the more tangible sciences or trades, or those who have only their own experiences on which to rely. We should be assisting and involving such others in the pursuit of the responsible society. The education of social workers should fit them for more than a reactionary therapeutic role; intellectually they are capable of making a greater contribution to society's welfare. By their training in multifarious areas they are well prepared for the task of co-ordination of interdisciplinary matters and for taking on an overall view of social planning, thus giving full rein to action and politics in social work.

As for those who accuse us of ignoring economic factors—there needs to be some demystification there—after all our economic advisers should see themselves as being in glass houses unable to throw stones! Economic policies of the macro kind have been polarised—monetarism or Keynes—with monetarism winning to the regret of the majority. Implementation of policies at the executive and middle management of government is uncertain and confused, caught in the contradictions of the capitalist system—if we economise here, there are job losses there as a result, for example, the rationalisation of the voluntary funds concerning their involvement in Medicare or the attempts of Federal Finance Minister Dawkins to drive himself—so that competence and efficiency once considered essential to economical activity are dismissed. Meanwhile micro-economic policies are virtually ignored, being seen as inextricably tied to the macro and the executive implementation methods. And what of the national use of existing resources? Social work educators are not producing graduates who are skilled in using existing resources, but we cannot lay the blame at education's feet. Practitioners should be bashing at the doors of our schools of social work and telling them what is wrong with their courses. Coming as I have from a completely integrated educator–practitioner seminar it appears that educators in Australia dominate our professional association; our conferences; our public voice; our political contacts; our professional journal. To paraphase Edmund Burke, 'it is only necessary for educators to be heard that practitioners be silent.' Practitioners with their wealth of knowledge gained as experience adds to academic learning, are 'nervous Nellies' when it comes to publishing. This is often due to what I called 'methodology snobbery' in an earlier Norma Parker Address. Publishing in learned journals, letters to the editors of newspapers, even an article in a local throwaway is part of the politicking included in the title of this paper which derives from 'Publish or perish' (a principle to which our educators are not loath to adhere, whether it does society any good or not). The original derivation of the title is no longer acceptable, for those old enough to remember, it was 'Populate or perish.'

In reconsidering our philosophic approach, some attention ought to be given to the question of from what base the social worker draws advice given to clients—how value-laden is it? Is the social worker being seen as the solution rather than the reform of the system or the self determination by the client? If the social worker is perceived as the solution, perhaps that is the excuse that could be preferred for the increasing number of complaints about the poor manners of Australian social workers—keeping people waiting, punitive attitudes, the latter being seen by a client in Perth recently as needing a summary response, to wit, a chair. The chair (fortunately light) was broken over the (again

fortunately) arm-protected head of a social worker who had brought the client to his office from a long distance and kept her waiting *all* day. No wonder we find social workers caricatured in stage roles such as that in *Extremities* a play about rape where the social worker is portrayed as trying 'to identify the problem and deals largely in cliches which offer no real solution' or so said the critique. Perhaps social workers don't want to get into political activity at any level because the job is just a job—maybe the expectations of many are too idealistic. Some pointers in this direction occurred when the Premier of Western Australia announced his intention to introduce legislation to cut the salaries of public servants earning $29,500 or more on an increasing scale to a maximum of 10%. Many highly paid social workers, previously advocates of the redistribution of income, have been observed to be qualifying their previous predeliction for equity, generally accompanied by what ungenerous colleagues describe as 'stuck-pig' cries of 'why not him, her, they, anyone but me!'

Lord Beveridge defined the philanthropic motive as a desire by one's personal action to make life happier for others. He says,

> In the unequal society of the past there were always dynamic individuals with social consciences who could use the resources of their own and their friends' money and leisure. In the future there will be dynamic individuals with consciences but they may not so easily find the material means of doing their work, and they will not find it in the same way.

Social work may be the only effective way of carrying on the dynamism of earlier reformers because most dynamism in modern society seems to be directed at hedonistic rather than reformist goals. And, further to the theme of redistribution of income, what of job sharing among social workers to enable those recently graduated to gain experience part-time or full-time if they have family responsibilities. Let us think really hard about the benefits to colleagues, new graduates, clients and our own quality of life which could result from job sharing.

Some of the things I have said in this paper may appear harsh and unjust—of course there are social workers already doing these things and agonising over being unable to do more—but that harshness probably springs from desperation for, after eight years of Presidency of this organisation, I see little progress towards the goals that social work could achieve. My advancing years also perhaps mistakenly give me the effrontery to criticise as I continue to observe the injustices and inefficiencies of society about me. Faults which could be, I

believe, remedied by logical, compassionate collective moves of individuals.

Finally, social workers are already involved in political activity either as doers, observers or obstructors of methods of change—the need is to analyse historically, politically, socially and economically what has happened, is and will be happening, and plan to make up for past mistakes and neglects, use what is appropriate, and transfer this knowledge into present situations for the relief of problems and, having stabilised, prepare for take-off with reasonable assurance of future success. We have wandered, unsure of our professional status, unsure of how to be effective in the wider sense, so we nibble at the edges, luxuriating in the latest 'in' therapy or trendy theory. To influence the direction society takes we must have power to be or affect others who are decision makers. At what level will we be active and in what ways, depends on individual characteristics, levels of occupational and other prestige, and opportunity. At whatever level we have our own twopennyworth, we need to be aware of the political practices of others.

The 'perish' part of this paper I have not addressed, sufficient to say it is inevitable unless social workers get a piece of the political action.