

**"Surviving Repressive Policy: An International Perspective"**

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Some of the concepts presented in this paper were discussed in two earlier presentations: at the 1989 annual conference of the Alberta association of social workers (Calgary, March 29, 1989), and at the University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work on the occasion of their 75th anniversary (Toronto, October 11, 1989). Others are in press (May, 1990) with *The Advocate*, the newsletter of the Alberta Association of Social Workers.

These mist covered mountains  
Are a home now for me  
But my home is the lowlands  
And always will be  
Someday you'll return to  
Your valleys and your farms  
And you'll no longer burn  
To be brothers in arms

Through these fields of destruction  
Baptisms of fire  
I've watched all your suffering  
As the battles raged higher  
And though they did hurt me so bad  
In the fear and alarm  
You did not desert me  
My brothers in arms

There's so many different worlds  
So many different suns  
And we have just one world  
But we live in different ones

Now the sun's gone to hell  
And the moon's riding high  
Let me bid you farewell

Every man has to die  
But it's written in the starlight  
And every line on your palm  
We're fools to make war  
On our brothers in arms.

Mark Knopfler, "Brothers in Arms"  
Dire Straits

**First of all, thank-you for inviting me to "come home". In whatever part of the world I may speak on behalf of our colleagues in fifty nations, there is no place from which I welcome an invitation more, than from my own colleagues, with whom I came of age. It is in this country that I forged my lifelong link with my chosen profession; it is in this country that I have chosen to live the majority of my days; and it is to this country and its professional social work community that I owe the biggest debt for the gift that being an international president is. For this, I am unabashedly grateful... and unashamedly loyal. Thank-you.**

### **Part I: "Brothers in Arms"**

This is a story in four parts: the first part... The genesis... you have already heard. The long poem with which I began this evening is really a song, grafted and sung by the haunting voice of Mark Knopfler, the lead vocalist of the rock band "Dire Straits"... He wrote the song for those "brothers in arms" (and "sisters in arms", too) struggling against apartheid in South Africa... And he wrote it for a particular person: Nelson Mandela. The song is a structure which contains in it, for those whom wish to listen, all the evocative emotions associated with the struggle for basic human rights and social justice, and the powerful sense of brotherhood and solidarity this creates in the participants in any cause so just... and so difficult.

The second part of the story will give you an example of one of your colleagues... a social worker whom you may never meet... who fights daily against repressive human rights policies, and who fights the same battle, organizationally, for I.F.S.W., i.e., for You.

The third part of the tale is devoted to explaining the link between what we think and do, as social workers, and the new physics. We simply cannot do what we do... think the way we think... and believe what we believe... without taking into account that science and religion, or science and philosophy, or the physical and the metaphysical, are headed toward a reunification in this last decade of the 20th century. How we fight repressive policies depends on our manner of thinking, not just about those policies, but about everything else in our environment, and in the universe. What if the chaos of our lives, our families, and our social services, our political and economic structures, operates by the same principles as does chaos in the organic world... and there is a pattern to that chaos, a pattern that we could understand and shape? Is that too much to postulate? About why I've chosen this:

"If, at a particular moment, we are in a position where we must choose a particular model, we should probably choose the most dramatic one — that is, the one that imparts to the event being studied the greatest possible significance."

Peck, People of the Lie, 1983: 38

The last chapter of the story was written on the eighteenth day of the strike in Alberta of government social workers, psychologists, and child care workers. It represents an attempt to pull together the personal response of one social worker, using as a base our new knowledge of physics, energy, synergy, and chaos. The "case example," hopefully, may serve to illustrate how we can work "systemically" and, within that framework, proceed "systematically" (Ramsay, 1989).

## **Part II: An International Sister in Arms**

It is in the field of human rights and our work with amnesty international, that IFSW draws us together (as the beginning song stated) as "Brothers in Arms". Some of you, who have been writing letters at the behest of Marcus Busch of CASW and AASW... will already know that there are many of our colleagues who have been imprisoned, often with no charges and no trial and no legal counsel, tortured, raped, beaten, deprived of all of the freedoms that we take for granted. What we, as westerners and northerners in the world have to "get around" is our mind-set that says "where there's smoke, there's fire." this statement is a lie of the worst sort in many of the countries of the world. It may well be a lie here, too... and we know it not.

Many of our "brothers" (and that includes "sisters", too) do live, as Mark Knopfler said, in "fields of destruction." to combat this and to express our solidarity and commonness with these, our brethren, we have, in IFSW, instituted a human rights commission. It is still linked through Terry Bamford to Amnesty, but because of its structure, allows us a faster response and, perhaps, a life-saving one. Terry is an urbane and gifted "Brit", living in Ireland now, and managing a whole health care network; he has also been our representative on the amnesty international group for some time... so it was right and proper that he be the secretary (as he modestly puts it) of our Human Rights Commission.

Terry has, in each of the five regions of IFSW (Africa; Asia and pacific; Europe; Latin America and Caribbean; and North America) a representative to his commission, who is the lightning rod for rapid action on human rights abuses. Most of the response consists of letter-writing, both to the most senior government officials of the country where the infringement occurred but, also, to the prisoner or their social work association, which undertakes to get your letter to the prisoner. These campaigns work. The metamessage to recalcitrant governments is simple: "The Whole World is Watching."

Evelyn Serrano is our commission member for the Asia and pacific region. She let us know recently that two of her workers (she is deputy chair and officer-in-charge of the task force detainees of the Philippines), who are actually volunteers, were detained by the military while the workers were holding their regional conference... much as were holding this one now. It was the first time a TDF group was raided... not even during the time of Marcos were human rights thus accosted. The two volunteers, Gary Lim and Susan Aniban, were both severely tortured. Evelyn writes:

"They were electrocuted in their thumbs, toes and genitals. Lim was beaten in his head and chest, poured water on his nose and mouth and his head was forced several times into a pail full of water. He suffered wounds in his thumb and toes as a result of the electric shock. Susan, at the other hand, was at the state of shock and could not talk. Her breasts are blue and black and she has burns on her abdomen. Lim also suffered some cigarette burns on his thighs. They were both threatened to be killed if they tell their stories to other people especially the media. They were forced to sign papers that they were NPA surrenderees. According to reliable sources, the military will be conducting series of raids on the offices of human rights organizations in this region... we urge our friends to write..."

Evelyn Serrano, December 10, 1988

And, when you write, don't mention our human rights commission member, Evelyn Serrano, by name... you and I and her husband and children cannot afford to lose her... and neither can the cause of democracy.

I do not tell you this story to shock you, but to illustrate that a way to avoid being entangled in one's own part of the social work world is to keep in one's mind's eye "the whole." this is not a recasting of the statement "everything is relative," nor is this a story your mother told you: "eat your peas; there are thousands of children starving in China." it is, rather, a way of saying that you can never understand "the whole" by merely studying one of its parts, however intensively. This is one of the lessons we have learned from the physical sciences (specifically, from general systems theory), and it has become such a truism that even CIDA's (the Canadian International Development Agency) slogan is, "think globally; act locally."

"If everything in the universe depends on everything else in a fundamental way, it might be impossible to get close to a full solution by investigating parts of the problem in isolation."

Stephen Hawking, A Brief History of Time, 1988: 11.

There are other lessons we have "learned" from the so-called "hard sciences," about how the world works, and I suggest to you that the challenge for our profession is to figure out how these principles may be used in social work. I am not alone in believing that we either make the paradigm shift or we become a profession that lived for a century and is of interest, in the 21st century, only to historians of past cultures (Ramsay, personal communication, 1989). Paradoxically, we are probably better equipped and better situated than any other helping profession to make that paradigm shift.

### **Part III: arms across the universe: a whole system perspective**

What we see depends a great deal on what we are looking for. As K.C. Cole has commented, "we assume that if we see a face looking out of a window that there is a body attached to it..." (Cole, Sympathetic Vibrations: Reflections on Physics as a Way of Life, 1985: 66). This is, perhaps, a startling way to begin to examine our assumptions, and our perspectives.

The perspective we take on a problem... how we perceive it... the assumptions we hold, will all determine and/or predetermine the solutions at which we arrive. But, what if it is our very manner of thinking about the problem that is the greatest problem of all? Ivan Illich sounded the warning many years ago when he said that we can abandon certain solutions "as we let go of the illusions that made them necessary" (Illich, ---). What he means is that we can surrender some of our problem-solving behaviours if we change our definition of the nature of the problem, or our relationship to it. Such an approach is familiar in family treatment, where it is referred to as "reframing" the problem or the question. A larger question is whether, in the process of that reframing, we are also prepared to change our mental style of thinking about problems in general.

As westerners in the world, and as north Americans, we are reasonably adept at cause and effect thinking and, indeed, have made some progress with this thinking style that we learned in our higher (and lower) educational institutions, a style we inherited largely from Newton. We know how to systematically attack a problem; attacking it systemically gives us a great deal more difficulty. Our mechanistic view of the world derives from Newton, and his laws of motion attached to the physical universe; concomitantly, if the "universe was, indeed, one huge mechanical system, operating according to exact mathematical laws" (Capra, 1982/83: 63), then everything had a cause and an effect.

And while Newton's insights were great, indeed, they fell to two other theories in physics: Einstein's general theory of relativity (GTR), and quantum mechanics (QM). Respectively, these two theories helped us understand the world in terms of very large galaxies (and gravity), and very small particles,

atoms, electromagnetic forces, and nuclear forces (T. Sasitharan, "The world of the big and the small," The Straits Times. Singapore, Monday, 28 August, 1989: 2).

The next great mind, and one of our time, is that of Stephen W. Hawking, born on the anniversary of Galileo's death. He holds Newton's chair as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, and his landmark book, A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes. Has been on the non-fiction bestseller lists for months. What it means -- that thousands of ordinary people are intrigued with such questions as the finiteness or the infinity of the universe, or whether time had a beginning -- one cannot be certain. But one thing it may mean is that our culture, as we know it, has reached what Capra refers to as a "turning point" (Capra, 1982/83), and what many have called a "paradigm shift". Hawking says that "the eventual goal of science is to provide a single theory that describes the whole universe" (Hawking, 1988: 10), and his most recent work describes a beginning link between the general theory of relativity, and quantum mechanics, raising the possibility that a theory can be developed which will lead to the unification of physics (T. Sasitharan, "The world of the big and small," The Straits Times, Singapore, Monday, 28 August, 1989: 2).

We have come to an understanding of quantum physics through the vehicle of general systems theory. General systems theory has taught us about the inter-relationship of parts and wholes... that the principles of organization, complementarity, interdependence, and integration of interlocking parts and wholes are inherent aspects of any living system (Finlay, Freeman, and Stolar, Unifying Behavioural Theory and Social Work Practice, CASSW: 1974). What this means in real life, is that there is complementarity between the parts of a whole system, and that you cannot "fiddle" with one part without its effect being felt on another part of the system. You cannot de-index family allowance rates, and not expect children to show up at the chain of food banks across Canada (and my province -- Alberta -- invented what I bitterly call "fast food for the poor"). You cannot expect child welfare workers to "make do" with less and expect a competent level of service to children, when physics tells us that energy can be neither created or destroyed, but can only be "borrowed" from other parts of a system.

And while it may be true that we can "borrow" energy (as defined by Einstein, Hawking, and others) from other parts of our physical universe, we who are charged with looking after the interests of clients have tended to look at "borrowing" energy only from the social systems of one country -- Canada. By this, one means that we have viewed energy -- not incorrectly -- as money, ideas, and people, but in an attempt to meet the energy needs of one part of the system, we have taken it from another. We de-index and "clawback" family allowance, not to redirect these monies to the poor, but to reduce the national debt, acting as though there will be no negative effect on women and children... acting as though there is no connection between tax policy and family policy. Causality, in the Newtonian sense? Likely, no. But, as Weisskopf, professor emeritus at M.I.T. would say, "there are connections" (Cole, Sympathetic Vibrating, 1984/85:311).

Without going into all of the characteristics of systems theory, let me say that one concept -- boundary -- is especially important. Every system has a boundary, a domain, according to general systems theory (Finlay et al., 1974), which makes "the system a distinguishable entity from other entities in the environment."

One cannot ignore boundaries, for they are a fact of our life in our galaxy... but we can make them more permeable than they are currently. The inherent problem with boundary-setting is that it can lead to a sense of "insidedness" and a sense of "outsidedness", and to a sense of "us" and "them", or worse, "us" versus "them". But, that is a Newtonian interpretation. A whole system perspective, however, means that we take into account "insidedness", "outsidedness", and the whole system, itself, i.e., there are three considerations. Not two.

Two colleagues, working in this area of general systems theory and a "whole system perspective," are Professor Dick Ramsay, at the University of Calgary, and Professor. Chauncey Alexander, at the University of Southern California. Both speak to the boundary issue. Alexander refers to it as the "sovereignization" of services ("Sovereignty, Sanity and Strategy in Social Work," Commencement Day Address at USC, 11 may, 1989). Ramsay says it means taking the view that "everything outside my country/gun/family is dangerous" (IFSW executive committee briefing, Singapore, 28 august, 1989). Ramsay argues for a "whole system perspective." he does so based on one of the "laws" derived from systems theories and from non-relativistic physics, i.e., that one cannot grasp one's place in part of a system unless one knows the entire system, and going from "whole" to "part" provides the energy we know as a "synergistic response." this is one means of providing energy to a system, or "borrowing" energy. "Discovering" the system, as Alexander calls it, might prevent "burnout" on the part of those in complex welfare systems in Canada, for they would understand the system-as-a-whole, their critical contributions to it, and the energy currently consumed creating non-permeable boundaries might be conserved for useful work.

If the best minds of our generation can give up the Newtonian view of the universe, i.e., a linear one, and decide that Newton's (and Descartes') mechanistic vision of the world as a giant clockwork was incomplete at best, and probably dead wrong at worst, why can't we apply these insights in our own lives? In our way of thinking about things, we seem to prefer to stick to "cause and effect", or to theories of causality, because they give us the (false) security of "predictability."

"The search for underlying causes is innately and powerfully appealing -- no the least because it implies the ability to control: if you know what makes things happen (or not happen) you might be able to make them happen (or not happen) again. Above all, people like to think that there are causes. It is disconcerting to think that events are random, that the things we see around us do not conform to an understandable (if still not understood) body of natural law."

Cole, Sympathetic Vibrations, 1984/85: 298.

As Cole points out (1984/85: 199-200), when people "talk about cause and effect... rarely do they know if the effects are really caused by the causes... It's all too easy to link two events in time and then say that one was caused by the other... But you do hear educated people say that welfare causes poverty, or that family planning causes teenage pregnancies, or that the paucity of decent television programming is caused by people's poor taste." one could add that people also seem to believe that it is our health and welfare system which has created the national deficit, that the availability of unemployment insurance creates unemployment, and that welfare causes teenage girls to avoid work by getting pregnant.

Again, as Cole said (1984/85: 301), "the truth is that we rarely understand what forces are at work...only in quantum mechanics -- in the physics of sub-atomic things -- do causes spring out of nowhere, or at least out of chaos, which is much the same thing (1984/85: 305).

Disorder and chaos are interesting subjects; let us turn now to the recent, and tremendously exciting "Science of Chaos."

Many researchers, and those replicating the experiments of others, have had the experience of having what appeared to be random and unpredictable findings appear in their research results. These errant findings have usually been rationalized away ("I've made a mistake," or "The computer has a bug in it."). For some, it was finding that very small differences, like rounding out numbers to the eighth rather than the fourth place, over time, made a phenomenal difference in their outcome. As Cole comments, "as in foreign affairs and personal affairs, one small unseen effect can be enough to change the entire

configuration of events...on the surface, causality and randomness may seem to be mutually exclusive; but, on closer inspection, they must be seen as complementary facets of a larger reality" (Cole, Sympathetic Vibrations, 1984/85: 311 & 313).

Chauncey Alexander, a former president of the International Federation of Social Workers, describes in his keynote address to the Arizona chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 23rd September, 1988, "that studies in recent years of chaos, of randomness, have yielded discoveries that suggest a science of 'chaos'."

Alexander puts it in a dramatic way: "if a butterfly flaps its wings in Los Angeles, does it have an effect on the weather of Tucson?" (Alexander, 1988: 3). The answer is "yes." both Alexander, and the popular PBS film in the nova series, "the science of chaos," detail the experiments of Ed Lorenz, which prove the above connection:

"...Lorenz (studying weather patterns in an attempt to predict them) computed the fixed points of three variables... He found that underlying the randomness of the relationship of the three variables showed a dynamic pattern that, when recorded graphically, resembled a butterfly's wings or an owl mask... the Lorenz attractor with its butterfly effect became recognized as the 'sensitive dependence on initial conditions', demonstrating the fact that a system in a chaotic state could be altered through the magnification that could arise from small changes."

Alexander, 1988: 4, citing Gleick, 1987.

What this means is that, in the linear world of Newton, we believed we could have predictability. In the non-linear world, we know that predictability is a myth, and we can speak only of probability. The "sensitivity of initial conditions", or the "sensitive dependence on initial conditions" means that a small force can have an effect out of all proportion. It can lead a system into disorder... but the absolutely compelling news is that this "disorder", too, forms a pattern. In other words, "there's order in the ensuing disorder" (Ramsay, personal communication, 8 October, 1989). We have a choice between what we thought or perceived were utterly random events, to be ignored (as it turns out, at our peril), or we can count into the order of our living systems the disorder and randomness, which allow us some measure of probability, if not predictability.

(The butterfly effect, or the sensitive dependence on initial conditions, has been demonstrated in a variety of other experiments, detailed visually on the aforementioned PBS documentary, and will not be elucidated here. Suffice it to say that the science of chaos offers the only reasonable explanation for phenomena not otherwise understandable, from turbulent behaviour like smoke rising from a cigarette and then breaking its "pattern"; to the human heart in fibrillation; to why a drop of water from a tap forms a sack, drops, and has a snap-back effect; to why weather patterns are not and largely will not be predictable; to the effects of cocaine on the interactive system of the brain, heart, and lungs.)

We do know, from both the "hard sciences" and the "soft sciences" (which are rapidly becoming one science), that negative feedback holds something in a fixed state, while positive feedback results in an amplifying or expanding state. In other words, what we are now able to demonstrate as amplifying waves on a computer screen when physicists map non-linear dynamical systems, like weather patterns, is what the behaviourists have told us for years, i.e., that punishment ("negative feedback") of certain behaviours exhibited by children simply is not a workable way to extinguish undesirable behaviour.



We do know that there is an order in chaos. What we do not know, in any given situation, is what it is that confines the disorder to "acceptable" levels, i.e., what is the "attractor," or the "strange attractor," as it is sometimes known? The critical question for us, as social scientists in what Ramsay now calls a "design science profession," is "how do we, in our personal and social systems, manage to gain the contained and patterned randomness of chaos, as opposed to utter randomness?"

Social workers are faced, as Alexander says, "with overwhelming social and individual chaos in the milieu in which we must function... chaos is not novel for us since it appears as symptoms of deficiencies in societal institutions, of class conflict, of psychological disorder" (Alexander, 1988: 2).

We also know that all living systems, not otherwise curtailed, proceed from order to disorder...that is their direction, and in these matters, direction is very important. There is not inevitability in this process, if we understand the process and we understand the world in which we are living and if we work with the great forces which move the world. The great forces which move the world go on...our only choice is whether we recognize them, or not...whether we count them "in," or count them "out." who, among you, is the "strange attractor," not eliminating chaos which, as we currently understand it, is impossible, but acknowledging it and working with it to reduce its randomness?

Cole says (1984/85: 327) that "...the biggest mistake people make in trying to create order out of chaos is to do it in one fell swoop...the truth is that large-scale cosmic order is built on small-scale local order. Stars don't appear out of nowhere, but accumulate by collecting clumps of matter over millions of years...social or economic order can't be imposed on chaos, but must be built up by many small simultaneous efforts over long periods of time."

You, here, have an opportunity, to understand the patterns of the universe, as best we know them in 1990. You, here, have the opportunity to think of how Newtonian physics has lead you to where you are, and how a whole system perspective (which includes the new science of chaos) can lead you to a different perspective on all social problems... It might even lead to a different perspective on problems you are trying to solve in your personal and professional lives.

#### **Part IV: Arms Linked: The Alberta Social Workers' Strike, May. 1990**

"Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart."

Yeats, Easter, 1916

All week it has been like this... cloudy, showery, brief bursts of sunshine. Nature proves the new scientists right; forecasting offers us no predictability, only probability.

It is mid-afternoon... the eighteenth day of the strike. No one thought it would go on this long. Moods change, like the weather... a breakthrough here, a setback there. Tempest again... We, too, learn to deal in probabilities, and surrender the futility of pursuing predictability.

A strike or, as it is often called in professions, a "withdrawal of service, is the outward manifestation of a long-simmering failure to attend to relationship problems, or an amplification of the sounds of chaos in a system. While all systems (of relationships) are marked by a process of moving from order to chaos to order, in a never-ending spiral, a strike represents, in some ways, an entry into a degree of chaos with which most of us are uncomfortable.

If we think about it, this is not mysterious stuff. Not paying attention to the system we call our physical being may lead us into the crisis of a heart attack, wherein we try to restore homeostasis to a heart in fibrillation and avoid the ultimate equilibrium; death. Not paying attention to our family system can result in the chaos of the removal of a family member, either through being the "identified patient- who bears the pain for the family, or through a child protection action. Not paying attention to our political system allows the chaos of demagogues or the desecration of Jewish graves in France or child poverty in Alberta.

It is little wonder, then, that those on strike feel the pain of those in medical crisis, those hurt eternally by their families, those politically disenfranchised, those religiously persecuted, and those economically marginalized. The common themes are chaos and discomfort and loss of homeostasis (which is quite different from loss of control).

And, so, from the vantage point of a rainy afternoon in Edmonton, and a few hours' respite in which reflection is possible, and when the talk has not ended, one can think on what this "practice dilemma" has meant thus far. [these postulations are entirely the author's, and should not encumber or free the AASW council, or any other member or RSW, from arriving at their own.] None of us wants to write about the strike for this edition of *The Advocate*. We are all tired... so very tired... the energy drained from us by the duration of our efforts, for we are all affected directly and indirectly by eighteen days of conflict. The strain is showing in the anger on the now-outlawed "picket line," in the tears of loss and frustration from the local 6 AUPE members exiting an union meeting, in the faces of government politicians who realize that each day brings them closer to the brink of some (as yet) unknown disaster, in the voices of the council members which can range from sadness to elation in an hour as each new development (or recasting of an old one) is transmitted to them, in the words of the media who try to reflect each turning-point in the struggle, and in the quick flash of irritation among all or our "significant others" when the telephone rings, when one more meal is missed, one more family engagement delayed, perhaps forever. No one wants to write of these things. We know from the physicists that the energy we need to sustain us can be neither created nor destroyed, but can only be borrowed from another system. The synergistic response of the first few days of the strike, arising from the sense of solidarity thus engendered, is beginning to wane. Positions are less fluid; attitudes harden. Time slows down. A numbness begins to creep in.

We know that it is the measured doses of conflict and pain and sustenance and love that, in our own development, have made us strong as individuals in adult life, and ready for the rough trade that is social work in all of its forms... But we know, too, that Yeats was right, and that too long a sacrifice "makes a stone of the heart." we have seen it in so many with whom we have worked, those for whom the space-time of their lives has left them broken and disconnected. We have also seen it in ourselves, and called it "burnout"... and the physicists and mathematicians have named this region of space-time "from which nothing, not even light, can escape," the black hole (Hawking, 1989: 183). In simple language, such an understanding implies that one alters the trajectory of one's organization, ie., AASW, to avoid reaching the "black hole" stage, individually and collectively, and the organization would attempt to influence both the government and the union to achieve a win-win outcome (rather than a win-lose or lose-lose outcome). The energy of fuel such an enterprise would come, at the organizational level, from a perspective that would allow the council to "think generically and do specifically" (Carol Meyer, AASW conference, Calgary, march 1989) or, from a whole system perspective, to "think globally and act locally." such a perspective permits an understanding of the parts and the whole in this drama, and of the relationships between them which would have to be initiated, sustained, or modified, as the case may be. The energy for (our) political processes could be found in our skills in exercising influence and in dealing with the resistance (Pincus and Minahan, 1973). And the energy for the personal sacrifice and investment in the task would come from the values espoused in our code of ethics, and from transmitting the pain and the hurt of those involved through the crucible of planned change process -- it was, after all, an honorary

member of AASW, the late Professor Albert Comanor, who told us to be "outraged at injustice, and rational in action." last, but of equal importance, was the issue of mandate, ie., What right did we have to be intervening, apparently unbidden, in a dispute between and employer and social workers, only some of whom were eligible for registration or membership in AASW? The answers are numerous: AASW is (geographically and legislatively) sanctioned in the province of Alberta; our members include both direct-practice social workers and managers in the employer's workplace; our code of ethics speaks to the importance of workplace conditions as a necessary component of the opportunity to practice competently and ethically; we have knowledge of the standard of care required in social service programs and in social service delivery, and we are acutely aware of the personal and social injustices created by neglect (or plain entropy) in these systems.

In short, it appears that AASW council is trying, on behalf of its whole membership, to practice social work in a disciplined way in how it approaches the current crisis of a strike. The council seems to be paying attention to all of the components of social work, wherever it is practiced in the world: the political, the geographical/organizational, the societal, and the spiritual/philosophical (Ramsay, 1989).

Showing up, paying attention, and telling the truth are normally attributes used to describe mature adult behaviour, but they may also describe "adult" organizational behaviour (peck, 1978). It seems to this author that, thus far, AASW (personified by its elected council), has kept its mental health, as it were, by its total dedication to truth/reality. Its relationship stance to both parties to the dispute has been one of loving confrontation" ... One that is devoid of the politics of arrogance or the politics of meekness.

"Mutual loving confrontation is a significant part of all successful and meaningful human relationships. Without it, the relationship is either unsuccessful or shallow. To confront or criticize as a form of exercise of power is nothing more and nothing less than an attempt to influence the course of events, human or otherwise, by one's actions in a consciously or unconsciously pre- determined manner."

Peck, The Road Less Travelled, 1978

In social work, we have preference for having our actions carried out in a consciously predetermined manner. Influence had to be exercised between, among, and within all of the sub-systems or constituencies with comprise the whole: elected officials in the government and in the union; AASW members in local 6 and in management positions; the general membership of AASW; the AASW council; the media; CASW and selected provincial social work associations; legal counsel, etc. Depending upon the occasion, the relationship stance employed was co-operative, bargaining, or "loving confrontation."

The means of influence are congruent with those described in Generalist social work texts (the list, below, is from Pincus and Minahan, 1973) and were utilized across all systems in a disciplined fashion. They include recognizing the usual bases of influence process (inducement, persuasion, use of relationship, and use of environment); and recognition of the issues in the use of influence (combining the means of influence, communication of influence and, most importantly, the cost of exercising influence and its value implications).

Again (Pincus and Minahan, 1973), resistance was dealt with by involving other systems or parts thereof, partializing, acknowledging the resistance itself, "loving confrontation" or upsetting equilibrium, establishing short-term or trial goals, getting help from other people, using group or collective pressure... and sheer persistence.

At this time of writing, the process continues, and it continues to be an interactive and interdependent one... it is an important to have members at "rallies" as it is to have direct access to a cabinet minister or to a union leader. These are not dichotomies but represent, rather, the profession's coming-of-age in a

time of holism. The achievements are those of inches, not miles, and some can only be told in another time and another place. For they form part of the culture of the profession. It would be all too easy to take the credit, as an association, for the first real breakthrough between the key players at the highest level... but that would be wrong, for it simply represents a milestone in a very long tale and many have had a part in the telling and the living of it, not the least those who have taken a great personal and professional risk unto themselves for the very things in which this profession believes.

It is still a cloudy day on day eighteen of the strike. Suddenly, one's reveries are broken by an unfamiliar thunder. A rush to the balcony reveals that flat formation and visceral energy of the nine jets of the snowbirds shooting across the sky, following the curve of the earth. They trail a lone tenth plane... I imagine that it is in memory of their colleague, lost in last summer's accident. Again, and again, they charge the sky, always in unison, always coordinated, working hard and easily together... and always with the memory of those who went before.

Sometime, energy can be borrowed from other systems.

"Through these fields of destruction  
Baptisms of fire  
I've watched all your suffering  
As the battles raged higher  
And though they did hurt me so bad  
I'm the fear and alarm  
You did not desert me  
My brothers in arms."