

Annual Report of the Executive Officer, 2005

Serving as Executive Officer during my first full academic year as Professor Emeritus has been a privilege. The continued excellent work of our Administrative Officer Michele Smith Koontz has afforded time to consider a number of possible options for the Society. We have updated the web page this year. Denise Knight has proven to be an exceptionally able Graduate Associate. Many of you have found her work excellent. She will be leaving our employ after the Annual Meeting and will be replaced by another young woman, Mary Walker. We anticipate that Mary will be equally efficient. The University of Tennessee and the Department of Sociology under the leadership of R. Scott Frey has remained very supportive of the relationship with the Society. Several of you have asked how long I plan to serve as Executive Officer. My health is good at the present time. My wife Ginger supports continuing the relationship. The University of Tennessee and Department of Sociology support the relationship within their contractual guidelines. Each contract runs from January 1 through December 31 following the budget year of the Society. As long as the Society is satisfied with my performance of the duties of Executive Officer, I plan to continue. (If I am still serving as Executive Officer when I reach the age of 70 in 2008, I plan to review the relationship myself along with Ginger to see if she and I wish to continue.)

In addition to her other responsibilities our Graduate Associate, Denise Knight, enters new material on the web site. I asked Denise to prepare a summary of changes made to our web site. She supplied me with the following. "This year, SSSP enjoyed the privilege of refreshing our website. With the assistance of Avera Media Corporation, we changed the color scheme and modified the look and feel of the website by adding new pictures. Specifically, we added pictures of Philadelphia, the site of our upcoming meeting, to the Annual Meeting page. The changes involved an extensive process of transferring all of the material from the old site to a new site with an entirely different layout. While the aesthetics of the site are different, most of the material is in the same place. We have also added software that allows the Executive Office to view statistics on what items were viewed via the website. If you have not already done so, please take some time to view our new website at www.sssp1.org."

As the report from the Budget, Finance and Audit Committee revealed we managed to finish 2004 in the black thanks to the paper gain in our investments. The Executive Office operated under the budgeted amount by over \$6,000. We try to operate both effectively and inexpensively.

During the past year I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the North American Association for Environmental Education. The University Studies Program at the University of Tennessee took out an institutional membership in the organization and sent me to the meetings as a representative. Attending those meetings gave me an opportunity to observe an organization relying on support of grants and corporate support for major expenses and for support for its annual meeting. Looking at the financials supplied to their business meeting, I became aware that a voluntary organization could be funded in a much different way than we in the Society for the Study of Social Problems are funded. Our major sources of funds come from membership dues, the journal, and annual meeting fees. During my thirty years as a member, we have not received direct monetary support from other sources with the exception of some sponsorship of events/activities at annual meetings. SSSP has received substantial indirect support from the institutions that have hosted our Executive Office and our Editorial Office. These institutions

have provided office space, utilities, use of equipment and sometimes financial subsidies for the operation of the Society. Looking to the future we should be aware of this support, appreciate it as it is given and recognize that much of it rests on the good will of the host institutions and their belief that our work and theirs complement each other. This year we requested some additional support from the University of California Press and they agreed to sponsor our convention bags. If you have suggestions of foundations or other groups that might be willing to sponsor activities of the Society please pass them on to me or Michele.

Continuing on the matter of support, from time to time during my tenure as Executive Officer, particular individual scholars who have accumulated some sizeable estates have approached me with the idea of making the Society a beneficiary in their will. Having some policies in place on how to handle such inquiries would be helpful. Many organizations of which I am a member have a small brochure on how to make the organization a beneficiary and offer some suggested options. Now that we have established some benevolent programs, scholarships and travel funds, the thought has occurred to me that the Society might wish to establish a SSSP Foundation to ensure support for the aims of the Society beyond the present generation of members. The Board set some precedent for this line of development when they reserved the income from the large PAX Fund investments for the racial/ethnic minority scholarship. I commend the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee for investing a portion of our reserves in community banks and credit unions. Using our investments to help communities in need makes our money count in yet another way. I am circulating along with this report a letter I received this spring from the Native American Bank. Should any of you have suggestions on how I might respond to Mr. Swan's note appended to the end of the letter, I would value your suggestions (see attached copy). If the Board agrees with the idea of investigating the possibilities of setting up a Foundation, I would suggest that they charge the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee and the Executive Officer with doing some investigation of steps to establish such, how such a Foundation might be promoted, and what goals for such an institutions might be established. A report should be provided to the Board not later than June 2006 so that the Board might digest the proposal, act and if appropriate present it to the 2006 Business meeting as a kickoff.

My "extra time" during the past year has allowed me to reflect on the identity of SSSP as a scholarly society. Do our members identify themselves as "sociologists"? The desire to meet with two days overlap with the American Sociological Association would suggest this to be the case. Even if SSSP members choose not to register for the ASA meeting, attending selected sessions of interest has not been a problem for some years. Of course entry into the book exhibit is monitored. Several have suggested that the overlap helps individuals at the early stages of their career in looking for job openings. Other individuals serving on committees or holding offices in both organizations note savings in travel where personal and/or institutional budgets are tight. Clearly members of the American Sociological Association share some of the concern for and scholarly interest in social justice issues that engage SSSP members. The Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, the Association of Black Sociologists, the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Sociologists for Women in Society, the Rural Sociological Society and some other professional groups meet around the same time and often in the same city. Given the opportunity for face-to-face contact and exchange of ideas that a cluster of meetings provides, retaining our policy of two days overlap with the American Sociological Association seems like a good idea. During the past year, the decision of ASA to relocate the 2006 meeting and our decision to relocate as well proved costly in the loss of an excellent contract that had been negotiated with the Hotel Nikko in San Francisco and additional cost at the Hotel Roosevelt in

New York for 2007. Fortunately we did not have to make any penalty payments on either the cancelled or the rescheduled contracts. Late changes like these raise the question how important is the overlap with ASA and the other organizations. During the past year, the Rural Sociological Society contacted us regarding investigating the possibility of meeting in the same hotel and negotiating a joint contract sometime in the future. Some members will remember that at one time we shared hotel meeting space with the Association of Black Sociologists and with Sociologists for Women in Society. Others will remember times when we regularly had jointly sponsored sessions with the Association for the Sociology of Religion. Should we consider holding joint meetings with other smaller societies with a strong sociological identity for some future meetings for the purpose of sharing the results of our research, holding training sessions, informing the members of the society about possible funding opportunities, and undertaking justice oriented advocacy projects? If such cooperation were to occur, when and where should it take place, how should such an event be planned and coordinated? A Board opinion on the degree to which SSSP should cooperate with other organizations in the development of joint activities of a scholarly or advocacy nature would be helpful to me and to Michele when we receive proposals from other organizations. My impression is that the Board is open to cooperative activities, but I do not have a sense of the boundaries of that "openness."

Public sociology was a passion for Alfred McClung Lee. I can remember an appeal that Al made to the Board of Directors to become involved in various ways in the writing and production of public affairs pamphlets. At that time, I believe the reaction of the Board of Directors of which I was a part was a bit unwilling to believe that speaking to the public about what we believe we know about social problems was as important as speaking to members of the community of social problems scholars. Charles Lemert in his foreword to Ben Agger's *Public Sociology* states that when a profession intends to serve a public, "It must also tell the truth about itself. This is easier said than done.No profession so devoted, as sociology has been to the mumbo-jumbo Agger exposes will ever meet its promise to its public. The work of the public intellectual begins at home with honest and courageous housekeeping. ... We must begin to tell the truth to *and about* ourselves. If so, then our contributions to public life will grow and the world will in time hurt less. If not, as we have been warned for years now, sociology will slip silently of the screen of public regard." In the next to last paragraph of the book Agger gives the advice to people entering the field, "Try to write so that you would want to reread your own writing." He notes that most programs do not prepare you to do this and that such work may not appear in the most prestigious journals of our field. "But if you publish work that other people want to reread, work that does not disclose itself fully upon first reading but, through its craft and sensibility entices the reader back for a second, deeper meditation upon it, you *will* find a job somewhere, especially if you bring the same excitement to your teaching as to your writing." My vision for SSSP is one of an association of students of social problems, speaking to the public just as effectively as we speak to each other. The combined effort of Robert Perrucci, Kathleen Ferraro, JoAnn Miller, Paul C. Rodriguez Rust and the authors of the individual chapters of *Agenda for Social Justice: Solutions 2004* provided an important step in speaking to persons outside our community of scholars. Let us consider other projects. Only a few of the articles in SOCIAL PROBLEMS achieve the goal of speaking effectively both to other scholars and to the public at large. Let us remember to constantly work toward the prize of making our knowledge fully understandable to all persons who want to work for justice and to make the earth a healthier place to live for all.

Tom Hood, Executive Officer, July 21, 2005