Implications of Green Movement Thought For The Macro Social
Work Curriculum in the United States

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The past few years have been difficult for macro social work education. The conservative poltical and social mood of the nation, cutbacks in social programs and shifts of social work student interest toward private practice careers have all taken their toll.

At long last, there seems to be some grounds for optimism. The mood of the nation has begun to change. Liberal causes, such as the environment, poverty and peace are enjoying a rebirth of public support. A recent review of polling data, for example, showed that a substantial number of Americans are committed to environmental issues (Schwartz, 1990). Interest in social work education has grown (Wilkenson, 1987), and there is evidence that students in general are beginning to select socially relevant careers again (Dodge, 1990). This evidence tends to suggest that the bad years may be over--or are they?

This long awaited shift in support may not represent a windfall for macro social work educators. In fact, if we are not up to the challenges that will be presented to us, it may very well represent an even worse situation: lack of

interest during supportive times coupled with a lack of
relevance to practice realities. This is not a return to
the sixties, but a movement forward into an uncharted future.
American society is coming to grips with a number of powerful
forces that will present new and unfamiliar problems. This
may be the dawn of a Post Industrial American Society that
Bell (1973) forecast nearly twenty years ago. In any case,
if macro social work education is to prosper, it must be
prepared to deal with the emerging social environment.

This paper will argue that present day macro social
work education is at a real disadvantage in dealing with the
future because it is strongly tied to the industrial society
of the past. It will go on to suggest that the perspective
offered by the Green Movement represents a unique opportunity
to make macro social work education responsive to the
problems that we will be asked to address as a new American
society emerges.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first part
discusses the changes in society and how these changes are
likely to affect both social welfare and social work
practice. It will also discuss the linkages between
industrial society and macro social work education. The
second part will provide a brief overview of Green thought.
The final section will use the Green vision to revitalize
macro practice and education.

Social Change and Macro Practice

The industrial revolution represented a major shift in the social and economic organization of the United States. The impact of this major episode of social change was felt by a large portion of the population, and the result was a number of serious social problems (Garvin and Cox, 1987; Jansson, 1988).

Industrialization not only required major changes in the organization of society (migration, rise of the factory system, urbanization, etc.), but also major changes in the ideology to which society's members subscribe (Weber, 1976). This required new norms concern the acquisition of wealth and the relationship between man and the earth. Economic growth was the key to prosperity and the good life and the resources to create this growth were available in almost limitless amounts (Todero, 1985).

Social work and social welfare are, in many ways, a part of the industrialization process. A number of authors associate the rise in the welfare state with the economic growth that was a result of industrialization (Rimlinger, 1971; Wilensky and Lebeaux, 1965). Garvin and Cox (1987) point to social work's emergence as a consequence of the problems brought on by industrialization. Social work has

existed almost totally within industrial society and its perspectives and methods are wedded to that social form.

While industrial society has had periodic crises, this social form remained relatively undisturbed until the late sixties. At this point, things started to come apart. The student movement in the sixties began to question the ideological consensus that underpinned industrialization. Growth and material acquisition were accorded less importance (Isserman, 1987; Cleveland, 1981).

A more serious challenge to industrialization came in the form of the beginning realization of finite resources. The two energy shocks that occurred in 1973 and 1979 created serious problems for both industrial and industrializing nations (Todero, 1985). The "Limits to Growth" debate challenged the intellectual agreement around industrial society and created real doubt about the viability of present society (Brown, 1981; Todero, 1985; Meadows, et, al 1971).

The problems of the eighties can be thought of as a reaction to the breakdown of industrial society. Taken in this context, economic restructuring, welfare state cutbacks, capital flight, aggressive militarism and exploitation of the poor both here and in the third world are justified as a means to preserve wealth in the face of a declining resource base (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982; Hass, 1985).

If one continues to subscribe to the values of industrial society, and are faced with potential resource constraints (which are not supposed to happen in the industrial model) then the logical (although not the ethical) thing to do is to decrease other people's shares of the wealth. In the long run, of course, this is the last thing that should be done because it doesn't deal with the root causes of decline (Brown, 1981; Cleveland, 1981).

The social work profession responded to this political challenge within the industrial model. Rather than deal with the problem of resource constraints and the need for a sustainable society, social work continued to advocate for a greater (or possibly restored) part of society's resources. Many social workers tend to see the problems of the eighties only as distribution problems, not problems of shrinking resources. This is not to say that the distribution of resources in the United States is not problemmatic--it is. The point is that it is not this factor alone that is causing the problem.

Resource constrains are not the only problem. Pollution is destroying what we have left of natural resources. People feel a lack of community which leads to alienation and stress (Harrison, 1989). There seems to be a general inability of large scale institutions to perform adequately. All of these things add to the evidence that industrial

society is in critical condition.

The advent of post-industrial society will also create problems. New values and new forms of social organization will be needed. Social work, a product of earlier social change, must be prepared to deal with this new world if it is to remain relevant. Macro social workers will be involved in shaping the post industrial society and welfare state.

In order to deal with the emergent society, macro social workers will have to understand and intervene with an entirely new set of structures and processes. Since we really don't know what post-industrial American society will look like, it is useful to consider the experience of people that are further along the path of social change. One such group is the Green Movement. Green thought can offer us some perspective as we design a post-industrial macro practice.

Green Social Thought

The Green Movement has developed a coherent and well integrated view of what society can be during its post-industrial period. The Greens have a vision of a good society that can fulfill many of the aspirations that social workers have for their world. This section will provide a brief overview of the major aspects of Green thought that are

relevant to the role of macro social work in a post-industrial era.

The Green Movement grew out of the West German political ferment of the sixties and seventies (Renner, 1990). While it later spread to other western nations, including the United States, it is still most powerful in Germany. Some of the early Green activists had experience in the New Left, but the Greens deny that they are part of existing political traditions. A popular Green slogan is "We are neither left nor right, but out in front." (Renner, 1990, p.26; Vaughan, 1988).

McCulloch (1988) observes that there is no universal agreed on definition of what being "Green" means. This is, of course, not surprising given the ever-changing nature of many social movements and the possibility of factionalization. There are, however, some areas of agreement. These include (1) a concern for the environment, (2) a strong position in favor of peace and against nuclear weapons, (3) a holistic view of the world, (4) a stress on global as opposed to national concerns, (5) a human scale political economy that stresses participation and empowerment, (6) non-hierarchical feminist-oriented social arrangements and (7) an understanding and appreciation of social and cultural differences (Boggs, 1986; Harman, 1985; Vaughan, 1988). This list demonstrates the fallacy of considering the Greens as

only an environmental movement. These are principles that few social workers would take issue with.

The Greens feel that industrial society is in decline and that it will be necessary to transform society into a more sustainable post-industrial form (Harman, 1985). The crisis is seen as global or planetary in nature.

The Green view of reality is holistic and takes into account the relationship between the natural and social environment (McCulloch, 1988; Harman, 1985). This view of reality corrects the industrial view that sees the natural environment as something to dominate or exploit. Social workers often pride themselves on their holistic perspective, but frequently ignore much of the natural world in creating this viewpoint (see Johnson, et, al, 1990; Hoff, 1990).

The Greens want to change the nature of social relationships to make them more cooperative and less patriarchical in nature (Harman, 1985; Boggs, 1986). Feminist models of relationship are favored (Boggs, 1986). The Greens also prefer non-violence and have been active in the European Peace Movement (Renner, 1990; Boggs, 1986; Chandler and Siaroff, 1985; Vaughan, 1988). Related to this is a view that discrimination and oppression in relationships is wrong (Vermont and New Hampshire Greens, 1988; Harman, 1985).

The Greens favor a political system that operates at the grassroots and is heavily invested in participatory democracy (Vaughan, 1988) and empowerment (Vermont and New Hampshire Greens, 1988). While the Green party did participate in the representative government of pre-reunification Germany, their preference is for a more locality-based arrangement (Vaughan, 1988).

The Green vision of the economy is small scale and sustainable. Sale (1990) points out that Green economic planning will address normative as well as technical issues. The Green economy will have something in common with Schumacher's (1973) "Small is Beautiful" thesis. As a practical matter, the Green Economic System could end the capital flight and deindustrialization that destroys communities and damages lives (Hass, 1985; Bensman and Lynch, 1987; Bluestone and Harrison, 1982; National Council of Catholic Bishops, 1986). Some of the problems of worklife might also be avoided (Levin, 1983). The key to Green economic thought is the principle of full participation. Work and the economy are alienating because people participate in a limited sense or not at all. They are powerless because they are denied full participation. Berger and Neuhaus (1977) refer to this problem in their treatment of the two spheres of human life in advanced societies.

The Greens have a number of interesting ideas that can be of use to the social work profession as we try to deal with post-industrial society. Many of these strategies are remarkably consistent with social work values and ethical principles. While it is unnecessary for social workers to endorse the entire package, there is much of value here.

Implications for the Macro Curriculum

Green thought can bolster the macro curriculum by making it more relevant to the social changes that are occurring in in this country. This contribution can be divided into four components: (1) helping to articulate a vision of a "good" post-industrial society, (2) serving as a tool to facilitate an understanding of post-industrial society (3) conceptualizing practice interventions and (4) facilitating linkage with ongoing social movements. Each of these topics will be considered in turn.

1) Articulating a Vision of a "Good" Society

Social workers are rarely clear about what type of society they are in the process of helping to build. This means that they cannot benefit from the advantages that such a vision can produce in terms of direction of effort and motivation of constituency groups.

Some time ago, Roland Warren (1977) argued the importance of having a vision of a "Good Community" for effective community practice. He questioned whether community goals could be set or progressed measured unless such a vision was created (Warren, 1977, p. 536). This same argument can be made for the creation of and re-design of societies as well.

If social workers are to be involved in building a post-industrial society that will manifest characteristics that we find desirable, some image of that society is essential. This is ideal type analysis. It provides a benchmark that society can be evaluated against.

A vision of a good society can be important to developing constituency support for desirable changes. This is fundamental to effective community practice. Staples (1984) and Kahn (1982) underscore the importance of this vision in building a constituencies. Kahn (1982, p.28) observes that:

In organizing, we're trying to do more than just fix up a house here or find a job there. We're trying to build a better world through people working together. A good leader has a dream of a better world.

Lack of such a vision deprives social workers of an important force for building commitment.

Another issue deals with strategy formulation. While social workers have some ideas about what a good society includes, the vision is not often explicit. This leaves us in the position of reacting to somebody else's vision rather than advocating for our own.

The Greens offer a vision of society that is not only desirable but consistent with the social work position on many issues. It is also a vision that would enjoy wide appeal during the coming years. The adoption of such a vision could revitalize macro social work education by giving it an explicit direction and create opportunities for programs to reach out to a larger audience.

2) Helping Social Work Understand Post-Industrial Society

Social work uses the findings of the biological and social sciences to develop an understanding of people in relationship to their social environments. This commonly represents the task of the Human Behavior and the Social Environment Curriculum.

How comprehensive an understanding of industrial

society we provide is open to question. Johnson, et,al, (1990) argue that biological content is neglected within the curriculum. While their focus is clearly on knowledge for practice with individuals, there is little reason to suspect that content on the global environmental crisis is included within the human behavior curriculum of schools of social work. Hoff (1990) makes a case for the importance of material about the physical environment. Employing a Green perspective could facilitate the inclusion of such content.

A Post-Industrial Society will require understanding of problems at a Global level. While Human Behavior content commonly includes content on human diversity, too often it is within a single society context. Even texts that offer content on society (Anderson and Carter, 1984; Longres, 1990), do not deal with global issues in a satisfying manner. It is true that social work education is trying to deal with the U.S.-centered nature of the curriculum, but a Green perspective could speed the inclusion of international content.

Perhaps the most important contribution that Green thought can make to our understanding of Human behavior in a post-industrial society, is the advocacy of new forms of human relationships. Research on factors that give rise to cooperative, non-violent and non-competitive relationships will be needed to advance our ability to understand post-

industrial society.   This is especially important in terms of
organizational life (See Rothchild and Whitt, 1986).

Green thought offers conceptual tools that can enrich
the HBSE curriculum, especially in the areas discussed above.
This perspective can add to our understanding of the global
environmental crisis that will usher in a post-industrial
order and facilitate our comprehension of the nature of the
post-industrial social order.

3) Conceptualizing Practice Interventions

There is a need to adapt practice to new realities and
social situations.   This is another area to which Green
thought can contribute.

There has been very little literature on the nature of
post-industrial social work practice.   A recent exception is
Harrison's (1989) paper on social work in Great Britain.   He
points out the need for community interventions that can
reduce the level of difficulty experienced by those who feel
alienated from modern society.   Green thought would encourage
this approach as a way to integrate people into the organic
whole of society.   This is an obvious application of macro
social work technology, used within a slightly different
context.

Existing macro social work technology could be used to implement some of the Green goals for the political and economic systems. Social work has a considerable literature on building participation and empowering communities (Burke, 1979; Rothman and Tropman, 1987; Staples, 1984 Reisch and Wenocur, 1986). This material can be used to advantage in creating participatory political human scale political structures.

The development of cooperative, community based economic systems will require some changes in the macro curriculum. McNutt and Austin (1990) found that few schools include courses dealing with economic system-related practice. There are excellent resources available, however (Morehouse, 1989; Meeker-Lowry, 1988; Bryun and Meehan, 1987).

The Green perspective could also facilitate the use of cooperative, non-competitive feminist based models of administration and community practice (Brandwein, 1981; 1985). Especially in administration, this type of practice should be especially attractive within the context of post-industrial society.

The Green perspective can provide an overarching orientation that can facilitate the integration of existing practice techniques with new goals and new knowledge about the nature of society and human behavior. This could

revitalize education for macro practice and free it from the
industrial model.

Facilitating Linkage with Ongoing Social Movements:

The final contribution that Green thought can make to
macro social work education is in the development of linkages
with ongoing social movements. This is important for two
reasons. First, it allows for mutually beneficial
relationships between practice and education. This has
always been a concern in social work education. The second
reason is the appeal that a Green perspective will have for
prospective students. People from these movements will see
social work education as a legitimate means to gain the
skills needed to advance their commitments. The training
will be seen as relevant to their needs. This is clearly an
issue in the survival of macro social work education within
the social work education enterprise.

Conclusions:

This paper has attempted to demonstrate the viability of
Green thought to the revitalization of macro social work
education. This body of theory and practice is not a
panacea. It is, however, a useful tool.

Society is changing in present day America. Many of
these changes involve a long awaited rebirth of social
consciousness. We are not returning to the "good years" of
the past, we are emerging into the uncharted future. If
macro social work education is to prosper in the face of
change, it must be ready to deal with these new realities.

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