



HISTORICAL SW&S PORTRAITS OF
IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL LEADERS IN SOCIAL WORK

Herman D. Stein, D.S.W., USA, President of IASSW¹ 1968 - 1976

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Herman Stein, President of the International Association of Schools of Social Work from 1968 - 1976, has for more than sixty years excelled as an educator, scholar, internationalist, university administrator, and leader in a variety of professional associations.

From almost the beginning of his career, the world has been the stage on which he has played those many roles, all of them with an abundance of talent. In fact, while he was in the graduate program of what is now the Columbia University School of Social Work, he had to decide whether to become a social worker or an actor. As an undergraduate he became involved in student theatrical productions, where he teamed up with the famous comedian, Danny Kaye, who became a life-long companion and friend. At the end of Steins first year in the social work program, he was invited to join an off-Broadway variety show that helped to launch Kaye on his meteoric rise on both stage and screen. "If I'd joined," Stein has said, "the theater probably was going to be where I would make my career as a character actor." Fortunately for social work and social work education, he chose instead to continue his studies at the School of Social Work, from which he received his master's degree in 1941 and the doctoral degree in 1958.

While the world has been his stage, education has been at the heart of his manifold activities. Following a period of direct service practice as a caseworker in a well-known private agency in New York City, he was recruited by the Columbia School of Social Work in 1945 as a faculty member. With an interruption for a significant overseas assignment from 1947 to 1950, he continued at Columbia for another fourteen years, rising through all professorial ranks to Professor and Director of the School's Research Center.

Educator & University Administrator

During his years at Columbia, Stein became well-known throughout the profession for his talents as a teacher, his ground-breaking work on curriculum development, his remarkable international achievements, and the breadth of his vision for social work education. It was not surprising that he became a prized target for deanships in other schools, but it was not until 1964 that he was persuaded by Western Reserve University to become Dean of the School of Applied Social

¹ International Association of Schools of Social Work

Sciences. His rapid rise as a university administrator began only three years later when he took on an additional assignment as Provost of Social and Behavioral Sciences. This was when Western Reserve merged with the Case Institute of Technology to become Case Western Reserve University. He then moved from the School of Social Work to serve as the University Provost and later as University Vice-President. All of this was climaxed by his designation as University Professor, a high academic status held at the time by only one other faculty member, a Nobel Prize winner. This position enabled him to take leave without pay whenever he wished which greatly facilitated his international work.

Against that background, it is interesting to assess his impact on social work education in the United States. Research, his initial field of interest as a teacher, remained significant throughout his career, but he is best known for his introduction of entirely new areas of study, inspired by international experience. Upon rejoining the Columbia faculty in 1950, following an eye-opening experience in Europe and North Africa with displaced persons and Holocaust survivors, he saw that there was something missing in the American social work curriculum. Let me quote here from my introduction to a recently published collection of his papers.

"In this collection of papers, we see the beginnings of his successful campaign to strengthen professional education for social work through a more fruitful and reciprocal relationship between social work and the social sciences. ... He makes it quite clear that while he regards concepts drawn from the social and behavioral sciences as indispensable in education for social work, he does not consider social work an applied social science. What he stresses as a pivotal concern is the relevance of social science content to practice. Again and again he underlines the importance of testing relevance within the acknowledged social work functions. ... The social science concepts he outlined and taught as central, the connections he built with related disciplines, and the research he stimulated all contributed to the enrichment and clarification of the knowledge base of social work practice." (Kendall 2003, X)

The courses he developed in this area along with a well-received textbook co-authored with Richard Cloward led to widespread adoption of a new emphasis on socio-cultural content in the social work curriculum. The impact was actually much broader than curricular enrichment. In the 1940s when Stein joined the Columbia faculty, the mission of many, although by no means all, schools of social work was to prepare social workers skilled in psycho-analytically oriented casework to work with individuals and families. To make socio-cultural content truly relevant to practice, not only casework teachers, but field work supervisors along with teachers of human behavior, group work, and community organization needed to come on board. The seminars Stein conducted for that purpose at Columbia and for educators at other schools led to lasting change.

His early years at Case Western Reserve coincided with the turbulence on college campuses provoked by the war in Vietnam and the civil rights struggle. His performance during a period of student protests at Case Western Reserve is still recalled with admiration. In a recent review of his service to the University, it is told how, as Provost, he insisted on meeting with unruly students and dealing directly with their protests and demands.

A colleague described his actions as a choice reflecting "integrity and honesty and humanity that is rarely equaled in people in high office" (CWRU 1998). In tandem with the President of the University, he helped to build lines of communication with student groups and arranged regular meetings for continuing dialogue. He listened and heard their motivations, he learned what

prompted their protests, and advocated patient reasoning with them. His Solomon-like wisdom was seen not only as a tower of strength but as the major reason Case Western Reserve University, after an initial period of disruption, "avoided the violent conflicts and arrests that were so damaging in many other campuses." In writing about how to combat racism, poverty, and all forms of injustice, Dr. Stein urged educators to capture the zeal of demonstrating students into constructive channels for change.

His success in dealing with minority students and civil rights issues stemmed in part from his experience as a senior advisor to Carl Stokes, the first black mayor of Cleveland. As Chair of a Commission on the Crisis in Welfare in Cleveland, he brought together a wide range of community leaders, many of whom had never met a welfare recipient. In a personal history interview, Stein describes what happened when they actually met welfare families and learned how they lived. "The elite members of the commission," he wrote, "were often flabbergasted at the knowledge they gained just through direct exposure" (Billups 2002, 267). The final report of the Commission, while much acclaimed, did not lead to the change in the welfare system that was hoped for, but did lead to a better understanding of the problems to be solved.

International Beginnings

In 1947, he left a promising career as a faculty member at the Columbia University School of Social Work to join the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) in Europe and North Africa. The call to work with displaced persons and victims of the Holocaust following World War II could not be ignored. In Europe, he witnessed the unspeakable tragedy of lives tortured and destroyed. In North Africa, he experienced at first hand the sights and smells of mass poverty. Those years can be seen as a defining time in his life. His work with displaced persons took him to every country in Europe where he saw how desperately social work service was needed. Upon his recommendation to AJDC, a social work training center designated as the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work was established in Versailles, on the outskirts of Paris. A former professor at the Columbia University School of Social Work was recruited to direct the program, which gave priority to the training of social workers for service in Eastern Europe. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, that objective could not be achieved. The program in Versailles was closed and then reconstructed as the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel.

Soon after his return from Europe to the Columbia faculty, he became involved in the work of the Division of Social Affairs of the United Nations. This led to his appointment as Senior Advisor to a landmark international Conference of Ministers of Social Welfare sponsored by the United Nations. Almost 100 countries were represented by Ministers or other high ranking officials with responsibility for social programs. The objectives, as projected by the U.N. Economic and Social Council, included examination of the role of social welfare programs in social development, proposal of principles for social welfare programs, and arrival at recommendations for the training of social welfare personnel. Prof. Stein helped to plan the Conference and drafted many of the findings and conclusions. A major outcome was strong support for a reorientation of social welfare toward a developmental approach, including attention to training for preventive and developmental functions. This coincided with Stein's perception, based on his first international experience, of what was missing and needed to be developed in professional social work education in the United States. Working with like-minded colleagues, he developed international

courses and, also, advocated better preparation for research, planning, and administration, cited as priorities in the ministers conference.

The Years at UNICEF

Over a period of twenty-one years, Herman Stein served UNICEF with dedication and distinction. His appointment as University Professor gave him the privilege of taking leave without pay to pursue other interests. This made it possible for him not only to accept part time assignments but to devote some years to work with UNICEF as a full-time staff member.

His long association with UNICEF began in 1962 when he was recruited as an advisor to the Planning Commission of Tanganyika (now Tanzania), a newly independent nation in Africa. He enthusiastically joined the young Tanganyikans who were taking over responsibility from the departed British to build a new nation. The productive relationships formed with the Ministry of Community Development in this first visit led to his returning every year for twelve years.² This was the first of a series of missions to developing countries. In the course of his long career, he has conducted similar missions on program development in more than thirty developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

While such missions made important contributions to the work of UNICEF, even more significant over the years was his work on organizational policy, structure, and management. At an international conference held in Bellagio, Italy, in 1964, a group of high ranking government officials from developing and industrialized countries along with outstanding economists and planners came together to plan for the needs of children in the developing countries. Dr. Stein edited the report which led to a complete change in the way in which UNICEF operated. Previously, all decisions by UNICEF field staff had to be routed through a bureaucratic maze involving WHO, FAO, and UNESCO. The requirement of working through all the U.N. specialized agencies also prevented staff in the field from making direct contact with high-level government officials. As a result of the Bellagio Conference this was all changed and one of the outcomes, which Stein initiated, was an annual three-week interregional staff seminar. After serving first as a resource consultant, he assumed direction of the seminars and carried that responsibility for eight years.

Much of his work on organizational policy and program development took place in his continuing role as Senior Advisor to Maurice Pate, Henry Labouisse, and James Grant, the first three Executive Directors of UNICEF. Two of his full time appointments and his final association with UNICEF occurred during the tenure of James Grant. At a farewell party for Herman, Grant described the seminars as "a process of reeducation and rededication" (CWRU 1998, 17). The discussions and training had the purpose of keeping the field staff vital and on board with UNICEF concerns. They also encouraged UNICEF staff to examine agency policies, raise their own questions, and engage in debate without fear of reprisal. Understanding other cultures and how to work in teams with people with different values and perspectives also emerged as important program objectives. Herman's performance at these seminars has been likened to that of "a world-class virtuoso musician" (ibid.).

² Here, I must insert a personal note. As Secretary-General of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, I was responsible for managing the biennial International Congress of Schools of Social Work held in Nairobi, Kenya, in the summer of 1974. Herman, our President with a heavy schedule of assignments, was in Tanzania on his annual visit. Unfortunately for him and for the IASSW, he was hit by an automobile, sustaining injuries that prevented his joining us. Such are the hazards of international work!

He left his mark on a number of UNICEF programs. He advocated an integrated approach to child development to ensure adequate attention to the many and various factors that affect the health and welfare of children and was instrumental in launching in India the first major child development project with UNICEF support. His advocacy of mental health considerations in work with children, which had been largely ignored in UNICEF programs, led to a connection with the International Federation of Mental Health and a prominent place as a speaker at one of their World Congresses. For Herman Stein, the long journey with UNICEF was replete with promises for the betterment of children, promises that he helped to fulfill. And he regards his assignments with UNICEF as among the most rewarding experiences, both personally and professionally, of his entire career.

Leader in the Social Work Profession

With his many talents and breadth of vision, Dr. Stein early emerged as a leader within the social work profession. He has served on countless boards, commissions and committees, research projects, and study groups. He has visited many schools of social work as a lecturer and consultant. For more than ten years, he managed to find time to serve on the summer faculty of the Smith College School of Social Work. As President of the Council on Social Work Education from 1966 to 1969 and President of the International Association of Schools of Social Work from 1976 to 1980, he made outstanding contributions to both national and international social work education.

My close association with Herman began in the late 1950s when I was in charge of the educational services of the Council on Social Work Education and he assumed responsibility as chair of its first Curriculum Committee. The charge to the Committee involved review of 13 volumes of a controversial curriculum study published in 1959 and the production of a new Curriculum Policy Statement. This was no ordinary assignment. Each of the volumes of the curriculum study had to be analyzed for policy implications and use in curriculum building. A previous move in the direction of a generic curriculum called for the elimination of all specialized sequences in the American social work curriculum. This represented a radical change, accepted with the understanding that the generic programs would include key concepts from each of the established specialities in effect at that time in the United States. Practice statements produced by the organizations representing the nine different specializations also had to be analyzed. Surveys of curriculum trends, issues, and concerns expressed by graduate and undergraduate educators along with suggestions from practitioners added to the mountain of material that somehow had to be gleaned for the new official statement of curriculum policy.

Herman Stein was the perfect fit for this Herculean task. He brought to the assignment his comprehensive knowledge of social work history, changes and trends in curriculum development, the characteristics of professions, and the place of social work in the academic world. His talents as a chairman were well-established. He knew when, what, and how to delegate responsibility for review of the source material. It was already been noted that he was a past master in handling conflict and listening to differing points of view. The Official Statement of Curriculum Policy that was produced and adopted in 1962 by the Council on Social Work Education represented the most thorough-going and broad-based review of educational and practice issues yet experienced by the profession. It could not have happened without the creative and disciplined leadership of Herman Stein.

When he was elected President of the Council in 1966, I had the privilege of working closely with him again, initially as Executive Director and then as Director of International Education. The powerful forces for change at work in this period had a far-reaching effect on American social work education. The Council had to encompass a new range of activities arising out of the anti-poverty programs, the civil rights struggle, student demands for participation in governance and curriculum policy, and the need for priority attention to the recruitment of minority students and faculty. It was fortunate for the Council that Herman Stein carried the heavy responsibilities of the presidency in this tumultuous time.

His experience with student unrest at Case Western Reserve University helped the Council deal positively with student demands and the disturbances that occurred during his time in office. He was equally helpful in the development of a variety of programs to meet minority concerns and underline the importance of social justice as a central value in social work and social work education. Perhaps his most significant contribution was an amazing ability, when acting as chair of diverse groups, to turn spirited and sometimes acrimonious discussions into channels for positive change. This talent was instrumental in bringing about structural reorganization of the Council, new opportunities for minorities, and strengthened curriculum offerings related to inner city problems.

Stein's international experience also contributed significantly to the Council on Social Work Education. He assumed the presidency in the same year that President Lyndon Johnson in 1966 asked for the passage of legislation that would greatly expand cooperative and interdisciplinary work among universities on international education. When John Gardner, U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare encouraged wide participation in this promising nationwide activity, the Council responded by establishing a Division of International Education, for which I then assumed direction. Unfortunately, the failure of Congress to appropriate funds to support the legislation severely limited implementation of an ambitious program.

Nevertheless, a number of significant international and interprofessional conferences, sponsored or cosponsored by the Council, were successfully organized in this period. Herman brought to this activity the benefit of his long international experience as well as his connections with UNICEF and other international organizations. He was particularly helpful as the chairman of an international conference held at the East-West Center in Hawaii in 1967. Leaders in social work education from all around the world along with selected representatives of related disciplines participated in examining universals and differences in social work values and practice across cultures. The many different points of view and the cultural differences made this a challenging assignment for Dr. Stein, which he met with his usual striking success.

While still very much involved with the Council on Social Work Education, Dr. Stein took on the additional responsibility of leading the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). Elected President in 1968, he continued to serve in that role for eight years and continued as a member of the Executive Committee for another four years. Those were years of notable achievements, largely because funds had become available to establish a Secretariat with salaried staff. How that came about is an important part of the Herman Stein saga.

From its conception at the legendary International Conference of Social Work in Paris in 1928, the International Association was managed by volunteers until July, 1971. As an elected secretary of the IASSW, I carried that responsibility, with the consent of the Council, for 20 years. The successful outcome of a joint CSWE-IASSW conference in 1970 dealing with population questions and family planning led to the production of a project to prepare qualified social work personnel for effective participation in family planning and population policies, programs, and services. The project, to be carried out through pilot schools in every region, was designed to emphasize indigenous curriculum building, interdisciplinary involvement, and population services as a significant component of social development. Stein's international experience was especially helpful in shaping the project and moving it through a series of demanding reviews within the U.S. Department of State. In the end, the project was authorized for five years, with sufficient funding to underwrite an office and a salaried international staff. That was when I left the Council to become Secretary-General of the IASSW.

The organization of an independent Secretariat in a building in New York across from the United Nations was one of the most important events in the history of the IASSW. The official opening on July 1, 1971, celebrated the culmination of years of hope and months of planning. Many legal problems had to be resolved, particularly the problem of acquiring an incorporated legal status as a non-governmental organization. The involvement of board members around the world in this new endeavor, the recruitment of professional and supporting staff, and appointment of expert groups to advise on the implementation of the project were demanding tasks made easier with the help of Herman's organizational experience and management knowledge and skills.

Throughout his years as president and member of the board, the name of Herman Stein appears again and again as a major speaker at the International Congresses of Schools of Social Work, as a summarizer of seminars and expert groups, and as the chairman of a variety of special committees and meetings. One of his most memorable contributions, however, falls again in the realm of diplomacy. With the adoption of a new constitution containing a specific reference to the principle of nondiscrimination as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the membership status of South African schools of social work came under review. The Joint Universities Committee on Social Work of South Africa, with which all the schools were affiliated, was represented on the Board of Directors. At a meeting held in Trondheim, Norway, in 1973, the Board set conditions that had to be accepted by the Joint Universities Committee and its member schools in order to remain in membership. In essence, this was a form of probation, requiring plans for implementing the stipulated changes along with regular reports of progress.

The problem was compounded by the potential loss of IASSW consultative status with UNESCO if the South African schools remained as members. Dr. Stein traveled to South Africa, ostensibly as a guest lecturer, but with instructions to obtain first-hand information from educators and others relevant to the questions faced by the IASSW in charting future action. Appeals from South African colleagues who were fighting the system to support their efforts against apartheid made a strong case for remaining connected. On the other hand, strong abhorrence of apartheid and racism in any form made it difficult for Board members to reach consensus on a course of action. The conditions set continued to be monitored through regular reports of progress, but the issue remained contentious until the end of apartheid. There was one immediate positive outcome of Herman's trip to South Africa. In testimony at a meeting with officials at UNESCO, his description of the actions taken by the IASSW Board were sufficiently compelling to remove the

threat of loss of consultative status, which would have had an adverse effect on IASSW's relationship with other U.N. organizations.

Many other examples of leadership in the social work profession could be cited. Some of a different order than those already mentioned include his association with Mayor Carl Stokes of Cleveland, with a prominent industrialist on management problems, with fellow scholars at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, and in numerous endeavors with representatives of other professions. Those activities along with the public lectures he arranged with outstanding speakers on global issues projected a strong image of social work competence, thus enhancing the status of social work as a profession.

Honors and Awards

Dr. Stein's outstanding service and qualities have been widely recognized. Among his many honors, he particularly prizes the University Medal awarded by Case Western Reserve University - the highest honor the University can bestow. Given only once before to a faculty member, the award recognizes leadership, service, and dedication. The Columbia University School of Social Work, at a celebration of its Centennial, inducted him into its hall of fame, honoring illustrious alumni. Smith College, where he also served on the faculty, recognized his achievements with a named award.

Professional organizations have been equally appreciative of his contributions. He was one of the early recipients of an annual lifetime achievement award established by the Council on Social Work Education. The National Association of Social Workers followed with its lifetime achievement award. He was also one of the early recipients of the Katherine A. Kendall Award, established by the International Association for Schools of Social Work for distinguished lifetime contributions to international social work education. The International Council on Social Welfare bestowed on him its prestigious Rene Sand Award for his contributions to international social welfare and social development.

Final Word

Fortunately, Herman's surpassing achievements and outstanding qualities have been seasoned by a quick wit and a robust sense of humor. His talents as an actor, carried over from his early flirtation with the theater, were on display whenever he could be persuaded to declaim one of the side-splitting monologues that he created in his lighter moments. It was my good fortune to have the help of his wit in fashioning skits that gently satirized curriculum concerns or other issues of the day that became a feature of the annual meetings of the Council on Social Work Education in the 1950s and 1960s.

This portrait of Herman D. Stein can be summed up in a few final words. He has brought honor to the social work profession, not only in the United States but throughout the world. His intelligence and creativity together with his knowledge and experience have had a lasting impact on social work and social work education. His world view and lifetime of international service have made a significant contribution to many programs that make this a better world for scores of men, women, and children. In sum, Herman Stein represents, at home and abroad, the best that social work has to offer in commitment to social justice, positive social change, and in competent professional performance.

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*Note:

In addition to the sources cited, material for this portrait has come from my personal papers and a variety of documents related to Herman Stein that I have written.

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