

# THE OXFORD CONFERENCE

Bert L. Kaplan, Ed.D., ACSW

As Chair of the SCSWP Education Committee during 1979, Bert L. Kaplan, Ed.D., ACSW, attended the first British-American Conference on Psychodynamic (Clinical) Social Work. Sponsored jointly by The Smith College School for Social Work and The Group for the Advancement of Psychodynamics and Psychotherapy in Social Work, the Conference took place August 22-26, 1979 at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. Funds were made available from the Society's treasury to cover a portion of Dr. Kaplan's expenses. His report of the Conference follows.

This historic first Conference bridged academic and professional institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. Some 120 social workers from Maine to California, from Southampton to Scotland came together by invitation to attend the Conference and to share ideas.

A formal welcome by the Lord Mayor of Oxford officially opened the 5-day event. The Conference agenda included eight papers: four from the U. S. and four from Great Britain, with opportunity for small group discussion after each presentation. Ongoing participation in the same discussion group for the entire 5-day period was most effective. In groups not larger than twelve, British and American participants learned about each other around issues, principles, values and priorities in an ambiance of mutual interest and responsiveness. And within this atmosphere significant issues were discussed.

The theme of the Conference, "Change and Renewal in Psychodynamic Social Work," provided papers on historical, theoretical practice and educational perspectives of each country. Topics included:

*Social Work and Dynamic Psychology—Symbiosis or Conflict*

*The Implications for Social Work Practice of Recent Psycho-Analytical Developments*

*New Findings in Child Development: Application to the Treatment of Parents with At-Risk Infants and Toddlers*

*The Reflection Process in Supervision*  
*Clinical Learning as a Developmental Process*

It may be of interest to point out a few differences in the requirements for social work practice between the U. S. and Great Britain. Social workers in Britain are not required to obtain a university degree. They must, however, complete a program of study at university level and pass a qualifying examination. Since health and welfare services in England are socialized, all social work positions are accountable to government agencies in

some form. This appears to be true regardless of the type of institution or agency in which social work is practiced.

Interestingly, private practice in social work is just beginning. Since no university degree is required, advanced formal education in the profession is limited and British social workers look to "institute-like" structures for additional training. Among the most influential at the present time is Tavistock Clinic, which is seen as the major service agency for the community. Tavistock provides the available learning opportunities for social workers interested in developing further clinical knowledge and skills. It was well represented at the Conference and its teachings offered provocation for interesting and heated small group discussion.

The Hempstead Clinic, funded from the U.S., serves primarily as a research center and has little connection to the British practice communities. Not far away geographically, Tavistock and Hempstead are far apart ideologically and, as one British colleague commented, "At Tavistock they don't own a copy of the *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*."

The conceptual issues which arose and provoked discussion revolved around views of projective identification and counter-transference. Influenced heavily by Kleinian theory, Tavistock interprets projective identification as a process in which the patient projects feelings, ideas, impulses, etc. onto the therapist. The therapist then identifies with the patient's projections, experiencing feelings within him/herself which he/she defines as belonging to the patient. Counter-transference in this context, therefore, consists of the feelings projected onto the therapist by the patient and used diagnostically for the therapist's understanding and subsequent intervention. The Tavistock view lends itself to the possibility of overlooking or negating the therapist's own unconscious as part of counter-transference and holding the patient responsible for the therapist's feelings. In-depth examination of this concept elicited interesting dialog. Having little or no familiarity with Hartmann, Spitz, Mahler, Jacobson or Kernberg, our British colleagues were interested in the theories of Separation-Individuation and the development differentiated Self/Object representations. However, their concepts are as deeply ingrained as ours are in our thinking, and no meeting of the minds came about on this issue.

Importantly, the British did take note that we are more aware of their contributions than they are of ours—several persons asked for material to be sent to them. Despite these differences in points of view and in familiarity with literature, a high level of practice competency was evident. An atmosphere of shared respect prevailed, and it was not uncommon to

hear our British colleagues state that they would not hesitate to trust their own patients to American social work clinicians. Feelings in this regard were mutual.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the spirit of camaraderie that evolved. The genuine respect and desire to learn from each other, together with the lovely scenery of the Cotswolds, made for a stimulating and most exciting encounter. Plans are underway for the next Conference, to be held in the U. S. □

## Four Awarded Diplomate Status



Gemma F. Colangelo



Robert P. Galardi



Paul Heber



Sumner E. Matison

Four Society members have been awarded the honorary status of Diplomate of the Society. Gemma F. Colangelo and Robert P. Galardi of the Queens chapter, and Paul Heber and Sumner E. Matison of Rockland have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to the Society and to their chapters.

Candidates for Diplomate status, in addition to being a Fellow for five years, must have demonstrated effectiveness, initiative, responsibility and dedication. A candidate must cite accomplishments benefiting the Society during his/her tenure on a State Executive Board committee if s/he has served in that capacity. On a chapter level the successful candidate should have contributed to the chapter's growth, have enhanced the image of the Society, or have presented a totality of contributions in more than one area of the Society which appreciably furthered the aims and goals of the organization and/or the field. Further, s/he should have performed his/her duties in excess of routine expectations.

Criteria for Fellows who have served the field of clinical social work with utmost distinction include teaching in an area related to clinical social work; publishing in the field; verifiable research in the field.

The candidate's chapter must approve the written application before submitting it to the membership committee for its approval, whereupon the application is presented to the State Executive Board with a summary of contributions of the candidate. □