

## **Professional Associations and Social Work.**

### **Working Paper 10.**

#### **The Moral Welfare Workers Association.**

##### **1. Introduction.**

1.1. This paper examines the organisation and activities of the Moral Welfare Workers Association from its inception in 1939 up to its unification with other social worker associations to form BASW in 1970. The paper is based on the MWWA archive which was transferred to the BASW Archive by the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility in 1981. The remaining records for the period 1938 to 1952 are brief and scanty, but from January 1952 full minutes of committee and general meetings have been preserved. These records have been supplemented by the printed Annual Reports and by the "Bulletin" publication for members, both of which are available for 1962 to 1970.

1.2. The paper is arranged in four sections covering firstly a description of the growth of moral welfare work, its organisation and its pattern of training; secondly – the foundation and early activities of the Association 1939 to 1952; thirdly – the better documented period 1952 to 1962 (when the Association was reorganised); and finally the period 1962 to 1970, when activity within the Association flourished.

##### **2. The Growth of Moral Welfare Work.**

2.1. Moral welfare work can trace its roots back to the provision of institutional care for unmarried mothers in the middle of the eighteenth century when the first "Magdalen Hospital" was established; but the real development and growth in concern for moral welfare took place in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Refuges and shelters were established to support "rescue" work among the "fallen" by such pioneers as Josephine Butler and Catherine Booth. Both the Salvation Army and the Church Army became involved, and a network of groups and societies came into being inspired by religious and philanthropic motives. This movement was not only concerned with providing residential care, but it included campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Acts 1866-69, and against juvenile prostitution or "white slavery" as it was known. There was also a campaign for the protection of young men spearheaded by the White Cross League (founded 1883). Gradually moral welfare work came to include both "indoor" work (i.e. residential care) and "outdoor" work ("rescue work" and counselling); and the many individual initiatives came to be institutionalised, particularly within the Church of England. (Young & Ashton 1956).

2.2. The Anglican dioceses began to appoint women organising secretaries for preventive and rescue work in the last decade of the nineteenth century (London & St. Albans 1890; Rochester 1894). The only qualification of these earliest workers was that they should be "self-devoted" women, their primary

objective being the saving of souls. (Hall & Howes 1965). But by the end of the century it was becoming recognised that the work was one which needed special qualifications and special training. Two pioneers laid the basis for later training. In London, Mrs. Margaret Ruspini established the Order of Divine Compassion in 1889 for women who would devote their lives to rescue and preventive work. This order set up a house for training “social purity” workers – St. Agnes House – in 1891 – which was to provide training facilities until its closure in 1941. In Liverpool, Miss Jessie Higson introduced the first training scheme in the North of England at St. Monica’s Refuge in 1911. This formed the base for the later independent training college – Josephine Butler Memorial House, which was to remain the focus for training in moral welfare work until 1971. (Heasman n.d.)

2.3. Meanwhile as the training facilities were developing, so the organisation of moral welfare work was starting to be coordinated nationally. Mrs. Davidson, the wife of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, had started to organise meetings of organising secretaries at Lambeth Palace from 1912 onwards, and in 1917 a conference of Diocesan Organising Secretaries urged that more organised efforts should be made to recruit workers, to improve standards of training and to fix salary scales for workers. The Church body which became concerned with these issues was founded in 1917 as the Archbishop’s Advisory Board for preventive and Rescue Work, with Mrs. Davidson as Chairman and Miss Higson as the Central Organising Secretary. In 1932 this Board became The Church of England Board for Moral Welfare Work, in 1939 (after amalgamation with the White Cross league) – the Church of England Council for Moral Welfare Work, and finally in 1958 – the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England Council for Social Work. By 1934 the Moral Welfare Board was recognised as part of the central machinery of the Church, and although the organisation of the work remained a diocesan responsibility, central support and coordination was provided from Church House, London. (Heasman n.d.) This was to have important implications for the MWWA when it was formed, since many workers continued to look to Church House and its officials for a professional lead, rather than to the Association officers, a fact commented on by the Chair of the MWWA in her review of the history of the Association in 1963 (The Bulletin 2(5) 1963).

2.4. The 1914-18 war brought about many changes in the field of moral welfare. A Maternity and Child Welfare Act in 1918 increased statutory powers in the supervision of “motherhood”, and by 1918 a venereal disease service was well established throughout the country. The National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child was formed in 1918, and the Adoption of Children Act 1926 institutionalised adoption procedures. A network of statutory and voluntary agencies developed around the issue of moral welfare, and the Church of England itself reviewed its services following a critical report of 1919 which condemned the harsh discipline and monotonous work in many rescue homes. (Hall & Howes 1965) One innovation introduced in 1919 was the first of the biennial gatherings of Christian Social Workers at Swanwick. These meetings were to provide an important sense of identity for

moral welfare workers in succeeding years, and also performed a useful function as a forum for exchanging ideas and information about the work.

2.5. The focus on Church House, the gathering at Swanwick, the meetings of the Association of Organising Secretaries, the common training shared by most workers at St. Agnes House or at Josephine Butler Memorial House, and the relatively isolated working conditions for most moral welfare workers, all go some way to explaining why no move was made until the late 1930s to form a professional association for these workers. Many workers saw no need for such an association and indeed the process of actually establishing an association took quite a long time once the idea had been mooted.

### **3. The Foundation and Early Activities of the Association.**

3.1..Although Miss Francis Martin claimed in 1963 that the MWWA was founded in 1938, the first trace of the Association is in the minutes of a meeting of the Association of Diocesan Organising Secretaries held at Swanwick in April 1939. That body was then considering its own constitution, but the minutes record that a scheme for an Association of Moral Welfare workers had been drawn up by a Miss Eva Williams and had been circulated before the meeting. Following discussion it was agreed that the Organising Secretaries should consider this scheme further and make the proposed Association known in their Dioceses. (M1/1:6) The Association of Diocesan Organising Secretaries appears to have sponsored the circulation of all moral welfare workers in the country with a printed letter, application form and proposed constitution for such an Association in early 1940. The circular letter suggested that the time was opportune for the formation of a new Association – “in order to link us together and strengthen moral welfare work as a whole. Such an Association would be similar to the National Association of Probation Officers or the institute of Hospital Almoners”. (M1/1:2)

3.2. The draft constitution outlined the general object of the Association as the improvement “of the status of moral welfare workers by establishing a standard of training and also to act as a link with other organisations and departments of social and Church work; to collect and circulate information of value to moral welfare workers as a whole; and to express the views of moral welfare workers on matters of public and general policy” (M1/1:4). This was far more specific than the circular letter which revealed a touching faith in the future – “the future activities of such an Association may be may seem vague at the moment, but many spheres of usefulness will arise through our fellowship as the Association grows”. (M1/1:2) The constitution produced was quite detailed, suggesting officers and a committee elected every two years with a balance of membership – 25% from Wales, Scotland and Ireland, 25% from the Province of York and 50% from the Province of Canterbury. Membership up to January 1942 was to be open to all salaried workers who had worked for an aggregate of more than five years, or to all workers trained at Josephine Butler Memorial House or St. Agnes Training House; but from January 1942 new members would have to have completed a training recognised by the Church of England Moral Welfare Council. (M1/1:4) Thus

from the start the Association put the emphasis on the completion of training as the essential criterion for membership.

3.3. Because of the difficulty of getting all the workers together to formally inaugurate the Association due to the War, a temporary executive committee was established by the organising Secretaries to run the Association with Miss Eva Williams of Newcastle-on-Tyne a Chair; Dr. Hilda Wallace of Loughborough as Secretary and Miss P. G. Baggallay as Treasurer. (M1/1:5) The sporadic records for this period indicate that one of the first concerns of the Association was to ensure its representation on the British Federation of Social Workers and on the Church of England Moral Welfare Council. At a meeting of 39 members of the Association held during a refresher course at Oxford in September 1941, it was agreed that an immediate application for membership to BFSW was to be made – since it was hoped that “by this means the specialised knowledge of moral welfare workers would be pooled with that of other social workers in urgent matters concerning social conditions and legislation, and in planning for the future” (M1/1:9). This same meeting resolved to ask the Church of England Moral Welfare Council to allow representation of MWWA on the Council. In the event it was a year before this request was granted, but the Moral Welfare Council on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1942 amended its constitution to replace the 8 representatives of the Organising Secretaries by six representatives of the Organising Secretaries and six representatives of MWWA (M1/1:15). The Association then reconstituted its own executive committee to comprise the two MWWA members on the BFSW Council, the six members on the Moral Welfare Council, and the three officers of the MWWA. (M1/1:17)

3.4. Membership of the Association was 170 in 1941, but by 1945 there were 360 members. Most of the Association’s work during the war was carried out by the officers, or by correspondence with members. The Association occasionally sent out its own newsletter, but generally members had to rely on the “Quarterly Leaflet” produced by the Moral Welfare Council for news of the Association. One extant newsletter of July 1942 reveals some of the issues concerning MWWA and its members:- a feeling that retired workers should not remain as full members of MWWA (the Association “might be hampered by ageing reactionaries”); a concern about the name “moral welfare” being a hindrance to the work; the relationship between their own work and the work of statutory workers and volunteers; the question of salaries; and the use of refuges as temporary remand homes. (M1/1:14). Members were encouraged in another newsletter by the words of the Secretary – Dr. Wallace – “It is hard for individuals to see the value of an Association, but to me who was one of those largely responsible for its formation, and who has the responsibility now of keeping it going, its value becomes more and more apparent as time goes on” (M1/1:16). 1943 saw the Executive reconsidering the training facilities for moral welfare workers, and attempting to pressurise the Moral Welfare Council to agree a national scale of workers’ salaries. (M1/1:18). It also led discussion on the 1943 Ministry of Health Circular No.2866 on the care of illegitimate children, which recognised the partnership between local authorities and moral welfare work and commended it. The Circular

encouraged local authorities to cooperate with and to reinforce the work of existing voluntary moral welfare associations.

3.5. Between 1944 and 1952 the records of the Association almost disappear. A letter of August 1945 outlined plans for a new constitution for the Association to replace the existing provisional one, and also informed members that for the first time the Association had been asked to supply evidence to a government committee – the Curtis Committee on the care of children. The letter also encouraged members to assist in promoting the formation of Marriage Guidance Centres in the country. (M2/1:3a) Although Miss Eva Williams was still the Chair of the Association, I feel it is significant that the Secretary is now Miss Kennedy, who was employed at Church House – thus blurring the distinction between Church House and the Association referred to earlier. The other preserved letter, dated June 1947, reveals the Association carrying out a survey among its members on behalf of BFSW about the question of the payment of foster parents. The vast majority of members agreed with payments and thought that such a scheme would not attract the wrong foster parents” (M1/1:21).

#### **4. The Activities of the MWWA 1952-1962.**

4.1. For this period the Association is much better documented. There is some evidence in the reports for 1952 that the Association had consciously decided to become better organised – the commencement of a minutes book, the opening of a bank account and the planning of a programme of meetings – but so far I have not been able to discover what prompted this new approach. From 1952 to the end of 1961, the activities of the MWWA were run by a small General Committee which met three or four times a year usually at Church House, London. Meetings for the full membership were sometimes arranged during the biennial Swanwick Conference, but the main event of the year for the Association was the Annual General Meeting held each autumn in London. This section of the paper will examine the activities of the General Committee during this time.

4.2. When studying the records of this Association, I was surprised to find how much time and energy was devoted to discussion and amendment of its own constitution. Many of the amendments now appear relatively minor, but they certainly generated much debate at the time. One major debate centred on the criteria for membership of the Association. This debate was prompted by an application before the Committee in October 1954 from a Hindu worker who had completed a course of training at Josephine Butler Memorial House (M5/1:34). The Committee decided in December 1954 that they could not admit the Hindu worker, since in their view the Association was only open to workers professing the Christian faith, however they did agree that the matter should be discussed more fully at the next annual general meeting (M5/1:35). The Chairman of that meeting considered the constitution was vague about whether they were a specifically Christian Association or whether non-Christians could join it. (M5/1:10). Again discussion was postponed until the members meeting at Swanwick in 1956 when proposals to change the constitution to form themselves into a specifically Christian Association

engendered a lively but inconclusive debate (M5/1:12). The matter was finally “shelved” when a statement was agreed at the AGM in November 1956 to the effect that “(a) Existing conditions of admission show that a non-Christian Briton could not become a member of the Association; (b) the rare student from a non-Christian race presents an anomaly, but they presented no threat of swamping the Association and (c) there was a need for a fundamental discussion of the nature of moral welfare work and whether only a Christian can do it” (M5/1:13). The result was that the Hindu worker could be a member of the Association when working in her own country (i.e. India), but members of other faiths could not be members of the Association in Britain.

4.3. Other constitutional debates focussed around the issue of the finances of the Association. The Association had few expenses to meet and consequently had a surplus to disburse each year. Debate within the Association centred on how this surplus should be spent. Despite pressure from some members, the Association agreed that money would be used to sponsor members representing the Association at conferences or international meetings. The opponents of this move wanted the surplus to be used for assisting members in financial difficulty or hardship (M5/1:6). Grants were also made by the Association to support moral welfare work in Jamaica and in Bombay; although expenditure on flowers and wreaths for members was not approved (M5/1:47).

4.4. The final constitutional debate in the early 1960s related to the functions of the MWWA with some members urging the Association to become a “more virile and businesslike body”, playing a bigger part in the question of future policy than it had done in the past (M5/1:56 & M5/1:70). The Association had endeavoured to run regional meetings of members in the 1950s, but without success. However in 1960 following a series of regional meetings, a working group met at a conference centre in Blackheath and discussed proposals for a radical restructuring of the Association (M5/2:17a). This group studied the constitution of other professional bodies and overhauled their own constitution creating a new Council of regional representatives to run the Association, with detailed control in the hands of an Executive Committee. Membership of the Association rested solely on the possession of a training qualification – thus non-Christian moral welfare workers could now be admitted (M5/2:4).

4.5. Apart from these constitutional debates – what other activities did the general Committee promote between 1952 and 1962? A good deal of time of the Committee was spent on arranging the Annual General Meeting of the Association. This involved obtaining speakers and suitable venues. Certainly these meetings were well supported by the membership – in 1952, 120 members attended; in 1955, 200 members; whilst in 1961 attendance reached 240 members. These meetings gradually adopted a set format of a business meeting; an information session conducted by Church House officials; and an outside speaker or symposium on some topical or relevant issue. Occasionally films would be shown, but 1952 appears to have been the last occasion on which the meeting concluded with “an hour of music by a pianist and violinist, ending with afternoon tea” (M5/1:4). Speakers included Sir John Wolfenden and Mr. Lyward, as well as Church leaders.

4.6. The General Committee also spent a good deal of their time discussing the identity of and the special contribution of moral welfare work. In June 1953 they circulated the membership with a questionnaire about the principles and standards of moral welfare workers. This questioned the nature of the vocation of the moral welfare worker, the relationship established between moral welfare workers and their clients, and the relationship between moral welfare workers and other social workers, particularly those employed by statutory agencies (M5/1:5a). The responses to this questionnaire led to the Committee discussing the future strategy for moral welfare work and their sending a resolution to the Moral Welfare Council that the Association “feels the time is ripe for a survey throughout the country of the present position of moral welfare work and its changing nature and will be glad if the Moral Welfare Council will give this matter their consideration” (M5/1:32). This request led to a long correspondence/ debate with the Council about the form such a survey should take. The Association proposed a questionnaire of their own in October 1956 and April 1957, and in September 1957 they tried a sample survey of their own (M5/1:46). Finally the Moral Welfare Council agreed to commission a report on moral welfare work from Liverpool University in 1958 (M5/1:18). Thus the pressure from the Association paid off, although the report of the survey when published in 1965, was something of a disappointment to the Association.

4.7. The final area of activity to be considered in this section is the Committee’s response to developments in the wider field of social work. The MWWA had remained associated with the Association of Social Workers after the demise of BFSW, and many items of business on MWWA’s agenda related to issues proposed by ASW. For example MWWA supported ASW’s conference on Ethics held in 1952 (M5/1:25); they endorsed ASW’s application to the Carnegie Trust in 1953 for financial support for a “generic course” experiment (M5/1:28); they became heavily involved in the ASW debate on registration in 1953-56 (M5/1:31, M5/1:35, M5/1:10, M5/1:40, M5/1:42); and they supported and joined the Joint Training Council established in 1959 (M5/1:18). The MWWA were also keen supporters of the British National Conference on Social Welfare, which was organising its conferences during this period. Participation in such joint activities and conferences was seen as “ways of keeping the Moral Welfare worker on the map” (M5/1:4).

4.8. The Committee decided in December 1955 that it should submit evidence to the Ministry of Health Enquiry on Social Workers (The Younghusband Committee). The evidence submitted strongly favoured basic social work training, but felt that there should be specialised training as well. Similarly the Committee were not altogether happy with the concept of an all-purpose social worker (M5/1:40). However when the Report was published in 1959 it was welcomed by the MWWA which recognised “the need for the Church and its agencies for social work to engage fully in the discussion and implementation of the report (M5/1:23).

4.9. The period 1952 to 1960 was dominated by the MWWA's focus on its own internal concerns (constitutional issues); the changes in the practice of moral welfare work; and its supportive but generally reactive response to wider changes in social work. By 1960 however the tempo of a rather leisurely Association was changing. One member had written that the Association "had been slow to mature amongst the professional association" (M5/1;57). 1960 saw a flurry of activity and consultation with members, which led to a new constitution and a new pattern of activities from 1962 onwards. This involved the formation of regional groups of members who would run regular meetings in their own areas; the setting up of study groups or working parties with a continuing responsibility for training, salaries and other topics; and the publication of the Association's own newsletter. This increased activity was to be financed by an increase in subscriptions and an interest free loan of £150 from the Moral Welfare Council which supported these changes (M5/2:17a). The 337 existing members would be drawn into a more active role in the Association. The Annual General Meeting held in October 1961 lists the changes then taking place:- area groups had been set up and had begun to hold meetings; area representatives had been appointed and had met with the executive Committee to form a Consultative Council; a Working Party had met to consider the setting up of study groups and the subjects which needed to be given priority of study; and a newsletter had been issued (M5/2:4).

## **5. The Final period of Activity 1962-1970.**

5.1. The MWWA in the period 1962 to 1970 is almost unrecognisable from the Association of the mid 1950s. The Association is literally reborn and the breadth and scope of its activities is very impressive for what remains numerically a small association (membership in 1966 was 360). Of course problems remained and some issues were unresolved but the energy put into the Association by many members is remarkable. This section of the working paper seeks to convey a flavour of these activities during the period which led up to the formation of BASW in 1970.

5.2. From 1962 the MWWA was run by a representative Council, which met four times a year, and an executive committee which also met four times a year. The Council comprised 16 area group representatives, the honorary officers, 6 directly elected members, a representative of Josephine Butler Memorial House, and a representative of the staff of the Church of England Council for Social Work. Provision was made for the cooption of up to six other members, and the election pattern was such that a third of the Council changed every year. The Council demonstrated its independence from Church House by meeting at non-Church venues, such as the National Institute for Social Work. It had the responsibility of appointing MWWA's representatives to an increasing number of other bodies – ASW (and later SCOSW). The British National Conference on Social Welfare, the Joint Training Council, the Church of England Council for Social Work, the Council of the Josephine Butler Memorial House, the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, the National Bureau for Cooperation in Child Care, and the National Council of Women. The MWWA were no longer isolated but were clearly involved in the network of Church, social work and



child care organisations. One feature of the Council meetings was the reporting back to the Council by their representatives, reports which were then circulated to the membership via the Annual Reports and the Bulletin.

5.3. A major feature of the Council meetings during these eight years was the reports given at each meeting by the area group representatives. After each group representative had reported on their group activities the Council would debate any issues which concerned that area and they would draw out any points on which the Association as a whole felt the need to act. The area group reports reveal a high level of member participation in local activities. Group activities included talks by visiting speakers, study days, and in one case – an annual residential “retreat” for members. The groups were also given specific tasks by the Council, for example, the preparation of Association reports or serving as a “watch” committee on parliamentary legislation. Although some areas had difficulty in sustaining activity (e.g. Manchester), most area indicated between a third and two thirds of members actually attending meetings (a very high proportion when compared to other Associations).

5.4. The Annual General Meetings provided an opportunity for the whole membership to meet, as did the biennial Swanwick conference. The MWWA broke with their London based tradition in November 1963 and November 1965 when they held residential conferences in Blackpool with approximately 140 members attending each of these. These conferences provided the opportunity for the moral welfare workers to consider the changing patterns in the organisation of social work and social services in the 1960s, and their role in this. Communication within the Association was enhanced by the publication of the “Bulletin” which was published five times a year from 1962 to 1968, and then less frequently up to 1970. The publication of the Bulletin was justified in the first issue – “There has long been a need for a closer link between members of the Association, as a stimulus to their thinking on matters of common concern, and a means of spreading factual information based on objective research into some of the questions connected with moral welfare work” (The Bulletin 1(1) May-June 1962). The Bulletin contained reports of conferences, area group meetings and committees of the Association; it had comments on legal decisions and parliamentary issues; its book review section included comments on novels and films; and it served as the vehicle for conveying SCOSW news to the membership. It was partly self-financing since it carried advertisements for job vacancies. Finally all these activities were summarised in the Annual Reports from 1962 onwards. The opening words of the 1962 Report summarise the change – “It is not every Association which celebrates its silver jubilee by the publication of its first annual report. Its aims and objects have not essentially changed over the years, but recently reconstituted, the Association has taken on a new lease of life.” (Annual Report 1962).

5.5. Part of the dynamics in the revitalised Association came from the Development Committee which operated from February 1962 until October 1966. This Development Committee had the power to appoint ad-hoc committees or study groups as the need arose. Area groups were allocated

responsibility for projects on the care of the unmarried mother; the incidence of VD in young teenagers and current trends in abortion and contraception for teenagers; vigilance work on railway stations; the reporting of moral issues in the popular press; and publicity about moral welfare work (M5/2:91). Some of the reports produced by these initial study groups were judged by the Development Committee to be disappointing, but other study groups carried out surveys into different aspects of the work, with varying degrees of methodological sophistication (M5/3:31). Other reports, such as one on illegitimacy, were used as the basis of discussion at Conferences (M5/2:64). The Development Committee also drew up and administered its own questionnaire on National Assistance Board practice, the results of which were used by Sister Flynn, the Committee's Chairman, in meetings with top level NAB officials to try to obtain changes in the administration of benefits (M5/2:38). In February 1966 the Committee embarked on an ambitious project of conducting a survey of the first ten cases in 1965 from a sample of 120 workers, to discover the needs for residential care (M5/2:74) – a report which was printed in the Bulletin (Vol.4, No.2; June 1966). In July 1966, in the absence of Sister Flynn, the Development Committee was rather surprisingly wound up (M5/2:43), although the argument about the way in which this was done continued for another nine months! It would appear that the Development Group had alienated some of the workers by its enthusiasm for research and questionnaire; and the Executive Committee in March 1967, after agreeing that the disbandment of the Development Committee had been handled badly went on to comment that members had enough to deal with at present in the way of research and discussion, and it resolved "that as a general rule questionnaires should go out once a year only and should not duplicate information that might be obtained elsewhere"(M5/2:78).

5.6. However the commitment of the Association to research did continue. One group involved in such research was the Adoption Committee set up in February 1962 (M5/2:56). It commenced its research by carrying out a survey addressed to all Moral Welfare Societies which were registered as adoption agencies. This revealed wide divergences in the practice of the adoption agencies and led to the Association organising a residential conference on adoption work at which 18 societies were represented (Annual Report 1963). The Adoption Committee then embarked on a very ambitious survey to collect information from all those workers who carried adoption cases on their workload. The Committee experienced difficulty in getting members to complete these questionnaires and following illness and changes of membership in 1965, this survey was abandoned (M5/2:41). Following discussion with Margaret Kornitzer, a new survey was initiated in 1966/67 (M5/2:78). Some 2,000 completed questionnaires were returned but the Committee then faced the problem of collating and writing up the survey report (M5/2:15). The collation of the information was a slow process, only 100 cases having been dealt with by April 1969 (M5/2:87); and in the end, at the last meeting of the Association in May 1970 it was reported that BASW seemed prepared to take over the adoption survey which was still being collated (M5/2:90). Although this is not a success story, it does illustrate a commitment to research, in the belief that such research may influence policy and practice.

5.7. Membership of the Association remained around the 360 mark during this period. Membership criteria remained the same, although in November 1965 the Association agreed that Moral Welfare workers who had been granted the Declaration of Experience by the Central Training Council were eligible for membership (M5/2:72). Persons in full time moral welfare work who were ineligible to become members of the Association were permitted to become "affiliated workers" in January 1964 (M5/2:34). The creation of this new category led to inevitable discussion on their rights (M5/2:70); but in the end the MWWA's affiliated workers were blanketed in to BASW as full members (M5/2:83). There was also a request in September 1962 from the separate Childrens Moral Welfare Workers Association asking if they could join MWWA as a body, since they were being excluded from SCOSW since they were not a national body (M5/2:59) (See Appendix 1). The MWWA rejected this corporate request since there was a "danger of opening membership to local authority workers who may be non-Christians" (M5/2:59). However individual membership applications were permitted and in October 1968 the Association did agree that the remaining members of the CMWWA could join MWWA and hence BASW (M5/2:83). The only other significant change in membership in these 8 years was the admission of 3 male members (Mr. Harvey of Manchester in October 1964; and Captains Demery and Smith of the Church Army in April 1965).

5.8. One issue which was a continuation from the period prior to 1962 was the debate about the name "moral welfare work". In 1964 the Association set up a small working party to consider this question (M5/2:35). The report of the Working Party noted that various dioceses were unilaterally changing the names of their workers and a wide variety of new names were starting to appear. After considering various suggestions the working party recommended that the name the Association of Diocesan Social Workers should be accepted (The Bulletin vol.4.No.4. October 1966). This issue went for discussion to the Area Groups, but in the end no change was made.

5.9. The Association also faced the dilemma of how far it should be involved in trying to influence policy. On some issues it rejected involvement, for example when the Association of Jewish Women's organisations asked for the Associations support in making known their serious concern at the rise of the NPD in Germany, and their fears of a resurgence of Nazism, the Association agreed "that the MWWA as a social work organisation was not an appropriate body to be involved in political questions" (M5/2:46). On other issues it found it difficult to formulate an Association policy; for example when discussing the medical termination of Pregnancy Bill in 1966, it agreed that support/ opposition should be left to individual members; but it was felt that the membership as a whole would support a protest against the clauses concerning abortion "where the mother's potential capacity to bring up the child was questioned, and also where there was a possibility of a child being born defective" (M5/2:77). In the event the protest to the home Secretary was not sent; and this is fairly typical of the Association's operations – a heated debate, perhaps a resolution passed – but then little further action, or attempt to influence the relevant policy makers would be made. Such tactics also

applied to internal Church affairs. Although the Executive Committee resolved to inform the Bishop of Hereford that the reactionary attitudes of church leaders in matters of social policy were out of step with those of church workers in the social work field, the letter was never sent, and the issue declined in importance (M5/2:77 & M5/2:78).

5.10. On other issues the Association did however take action. When they were concerned about procedures for dealing with girls between the ages of 13 and 16 years; they convened a meeting with the Association of Children's Officers; the Maternity Almoners group, the Children's Moral Welfare Workers Association, and the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child – to formulate guidelines with this group (M5/2:63). They liaised with the Law Society about the criteria for legal aid (M5/2:31). They established links with the Church of England's Children's Society and Dr. Banardos to discuss better means of communication and working together (M5/2:34). They protested at "inaccurate" portrayals of their work in press and media. When they focussed on detailed aspects of their work the Association did take action. It was the wider issues of policy which tended to be given lesser prominence.

5.11. The MWWA was one of the founder members of SCOSW and its representatives played their part in the negotiations which led to the formation of BASW. The area groups of the Association discussed the proposals for setting up a unified social worker's association, and the 1966 AGM was devoted to this topic. It is clear that as in other professional associations, the leadership was committed to the idea of unification, and when one member at the 1967 AGM questioned what the MWWA would gain by unification the answer was given "social workers would then be able to speak as one on matters of national and local policy, and so might be more readily consulted about it. They would be able to play a more effective part in both national and international planning. It was also hoped that unification might eventually provide a better service for clients by the removal of overlapping and the increase of mutual trust and understanding among colleagues" (M5/2:15). The area groups were less certain, with some groups preferring NAPO's solution of a federation rather than a unified association (M5/2:45). The issue was settled by a referendum in which two-thirds of the membership voted. 54% favoured unification, 46% federation (M5/2:79). Thus by a small majority MWWA remained in SCOSW and eventually merged into BASW.

5.12. MWWA took a far less active role in training and in salaries than the other professional associations I have studied. The Training Committee/ Advisory Panel only functioned spasmodically during this time. This was probably because those who trained moral welfare workers at Josephine Butler House were extremely active in the Association; and the relationship between the training institution and the professional association was extremely close. There did not appear to be the necessity for a formal framework for consultation. Similarly attempts to set up a formal Salaries Committee were unsuccessful, although the Association continued to express concern about the low salaries of some workers, and in June 1964 agreed "that workers who declined salary increases, with however good intentions, do

a disservice to other workers” (M5/2:68). But here the vocational nature of Church social work appears to have been the reason for the Association not becoming more active in this field.

## **6. Conclusions.**

6.1...The study of the MWWA has revealed an Association different in some ways from the other associations I have studied. Numerically small, operating in a very specialist area, working for a voluntary employer, the Association almost had to find a role for itself. Salaries and training were not the major issues as with some other associations. Instead the MWWA came in the 1960s to develop the “fellowship” aspects of an association to a far more intense degree than many of the other associations. It gradually became increasingly involved in wider issues both within the Church and within the social work community, and towards the end of its life its leadership were adopting stances which were similar to social workers in other professional associations.

Andrew Sackville  
December 1987.

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## **Appendix 1.**

### **The Association of Children's Moral Welfare Officers.**

This small Association joined BFSW in 1937. According to the BFSW Survey of 1939, these workers had "a duty to help children who have been criminally or indecently assaulted, those suffering from specific disease or bad habits, and living in immoral surroundings". These workers were employed by voluntary committees, and in 1939 the Association consisted of 18 members, all women.

The survey carried out by Eileen Younghusband in 1947, revealed that in London, Children's Moral Welfare Officers were employed by voluntary committees, but had part of their salary paid by the London County Council. They worked in close collaboration with the LCC Children's Care Organisers and Juvenile Court Probation Officers (which each had its own association). Some workers had a moral welfare training, some a general social science certificate, others were untrained.

This small association carried on its own existence until the late 1960s. It was affiliated to ASW and sent representatives to the Joint Training Council. It was however rejected by SCOSW for membership, since it was not a national association (purely London based) and it was only part of a larger specialist area (moral welfare). As this paper has indicated, members of ACMWO entered BASW via MWWA.

No further information has been discovered on this group.