PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIAL WORK.


1. Introduction.

1.1. This paper traces the movement towards the establishment of a unified professional association from the demise of the British Federation of Social Workers in 1951 up to the birth of the British Association of Social Workers in 1970. Since the successor to BFSW – the Association of Social Workers (ASW) played such an important part in this movement, the paper is structured around an account of ASW during this period. The initial section of the paper deals with the organisation and activities of ASW during the 1950s. This is followed by a section on the early moves towards unification – the Standing Conference on Registration, the Joint Training Council and the debate on the ASW constitution in 1961. The third section of the paper considers the outcome of these moves – the establishment and activities of the Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers (SCOSW) 1963-1970; whilst a final section considers the ASW from 1962 onwards, both in terms of its relationship with SCOSW and its own activities.

2. The Association of Social Workers in the 1950s.

2.1. As working paper 13 has indicated, ASW took over many of the interests and activities from BFSW on its demise. In some ways it can be seen purely as a change of name, but I would argue that there were also changes in the organisation of the Association which can be seen as quite significant. Full membership of the new Association was limited to those holding the basic qualification of the Social Science Certificate, whilst associate membership was offered on wider terms. Those Associations which recognised the Social Science Certificate as a basic qualification could affiliate to the Association. Initially six groups did this:– the Moral Welfare Workers Association, the Association of Family Caseworkers, the Children’s Moral Welfare Workers Association, the LCC Child Care Organisers, NAPO and APSW. The groups excluded by this new rule included the Health Visitors, the District Nurses, Housing Managers, Occupational Therapists and the Association of Mental Health Workers (which at that time included teachers of the mentally handicapped). In practice, for a few years, representatives of some of these groups were co-opted as individuals onto the Council of ASW. The net effect of these two changes was however to draw the definition of “social work” more tightly, and to link it clearly with a social science certificate, as opposed to nursing, teaching or other training. It also meant that other social work groups such as the almoners and the Association of Child Care Officers were also prepared to affiliate to ASW from 1957 onwards.

2.2. However the transition from BFSW to ASW was not as smooth and straightforward as the previous paragraph implies. A small core of committed
members held the Association together. In the first year of its existence ASW depended on a Council with an average attendance of 12 members, and an Executive Committee of between four and six members. The Annual Report for 1952 refers to “an initial period of doubt and uncertainty” (Annual Report 1952) and the Executive Committee constantly debated the priorities the Association should pursue. They were concerned that their future plans should not be too ambitious (B5/4:133). However the memorandum on future policy which was accepted was very ambitious, and included the aim of pressing for the registration of social workers; the provision of joint negotiating machinery for salaries; acting as the mouthpiece of specialist associations in relation to training (especially in casework, groupwork and student supervision); acting as an employment agency; and ultimately providing a central club and library facilities in London (Annual Report 1952). In practice, ASW was far more down-to-earth, and its initial activities were basically a continuation of the more successful of the BFSW activities, sprinkled with a number of new initiatives.

2.3. Before turning to a discussion of these activities however, I intend to sketch out some aspects of the organisation of ASW during the first ten years of its existence. The main decision-making body of ASW was its Council which met on average five times a year. This comprised members elected by regional constituencies, members elected by the AGM, representatives of affiliated associations, and a small number of co-opted members. There was a clear attempt to involve members from outside London, and gradually attendance at Council improved until by 1960, the average attendance was around 20. In between Council meetings, the main business was dealt with by an Executive Committee (which also gradually increased in numbers to 7 to 8), and by honorary officers. After a period of financial restraint, ASW was gradually able to build up its resources, although it clearly had to be very careful with its budgeting. It was able to secure and afford the use of a room in the offices of the German Welfare Council in Villiers Street, London, from September 1953 (B5/4:71); and in November 1954 it was able to appoint a part-time secretary – Mrs. Chesney (B5/4:76). Miss Dunball replaced Mrs. Chesney as honorary secretary in 1956, and remained with the Association until 1970, gradually assuming a more full-time, paid status. In June 1958 ASW moved its office to a room in Denison House (B5/4:99), where it remained until 1970.

2.4. ASW remained numerically a comparatively small organisation during the 1950s. In May 1953 there were 195 members, comprising 24 Care Committee Workers, 23 PSWs, 19 University staff; 17 Family Caseworkers; 14 Moral Welfare Workers; 10 Council of Social Services staff; 7 Child Care Officers; 8 Children’s Officers; 8 Housing Managers; 7 Mental Health Workers; 6 Health Visitors; 5 workers with the disabled; 5 workers with ICCA; 3 Probation Officers; 3 in central government departments; and 35 others (B5/4:70). By 1959, there were 320 members (Waldron 1959). The Association was constantly carrying out recruitment campaigns, using notable members such as Eileen Younghusband, as speakers at regional recruitment meetings (B5/4:136). But as the 1954 Annual Report ruefully commented – “social Workers’ salaries are notoriously low, and many, although interested, feel
unable to pay too heavy subscriptions” (Annual Report 1954). The ASW did however make attempts to get local groups started in parts of the country other than London. They held conferences and meetings in provincial towns which often provided the impetus to launch a local branch (e.g. Sheffield 1955). But the central body were also aware that many local groups of social workers operated on wider terms than ASW membership, for example as “social workers luncheon clubs” (B5/4:73). The Council did agree in 1957 to finance any deficit on a year's working of a local group at 5 shillings a head, up to £5, after the accounts had been properly audited (B5/4:93). However it is only in the late 1950s that the activities of these local groups start to be reported in the ASW Annual Reports – London from 1956; Birmingham, Leeds and Nottingham from 1958; and Leicester and Sheffield in 1959. This growth of regional activities also posed its problems for the central Council when in 1960 they reprimanded the Leicester Branch for directly lobbying the Home Secretary over the Wolfenden Report, without consulting the Executive Committee (B5/5:79). But the centre took the initiative in 1961 of calling 6 monthly meetings of Branch Secretaries, and the activities of local branches are certainly one important feature of ASW in the 1960s to which I will return later.

2.5. ASW kept in touch with its membership by means of a quarterly “ASW News”; but from January 1959 this appeared as an inset within the independently published journal “Case Conference”. “Case Conference” had been founded Mrs. K. McDougall in May 1954 as a vehicle for giving different specialists the opportunity to exchange views with each other. It quickly became a major forum for contributions from social work educators and from practitioners in various social work fields. In 1958 Mrs. McDougall entered into discussions with ASW which led to a new Board of Directors being appointed for “Case Conference”, two-thirds of whom were ASW nominees. ASW also agreed to pay Case Conference five shillings a head, for the journal to be delivered to its members (B5/4:100). Thus began a fruitful partnership which was to continue until 1971, when Case Conference was replaced by Social Work Today.

2.6. One final feature of the organisation of ASW remains to be commented on. In April 1955, a member – Miss Rackham, complained about the un-businesslike way in which ASW was run. She felt that it was not giving a lead to social workers in the country as a whole; its aims were too vague; and it was attempting to do too much before it was on its feet (B5/4:145). The Executive Committee were very concerned about this criticism, and from 1957 onwards a major Council meeting was held in the early part of the Association’s year which set out the objectives for the Association in the coming twelve months. Each Association Committee was set specific tasks, and the Association as a whole decided on its priorities for the year (B5/4:165; B5/5:11 & 17). Committees which had lost their sense of direction were shut down, whilst new working parties were established to examine new issues. By the end of the 1950s the ASW appears far more purposeful and it is ready to play a major role in moves towards unification, but before turning to these a brief examination must be made of the activities of ASW during the 1950s.
2.7. ASW continued to use some of the committees which the BFSW had established. The rehabilitation committee ceased to function, but the Care of Children and the International Committees continued to operate. The Care of Children committee produced two short practice pamphlets – “Children Neglected or Ill-Treated in Their Own Homes” in 1953, and “Children Away from Home” in 1954. The Committee also maintained its interest in the emigration of children. After a period of inactivity in 1955, the committee reactivated itself to prepare material for the 1957 British National Conference on Children and Young People, and following this, it prepared evidence on the Association’s behalf for the Ingleby Committee on Children and Young Persons. The International Committee also continued to adapt to changing demands on it. Whilst it continued to maintain international links it also hosted a series of meetings in London for foreign social workers, and from 1955 onwards it also discussed “problems arising from the influx of coloured workers into this country” (B5/4:144). Another subtle change which can be noted in the late 1950s is a more critical approach to the various international organisations and meetings. The International Committee attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of the International Federation of Social Workers in 1957 (B5/4:158); and in 1959 they were critical of a European symposium on co-operation in social work in Europe which had been held in Strasbourg (B5/5:14). In 1961 they put forward proposals for the more democratic management of IFSW affairs (B5/5:22).

2.8. The ASW also inherited from BFSW an interest in social work training. The formation of ASW coincided with the publication of the second of Eileen Younghusband’s Carnegie Reports, and an ad hoc committee – “The Younghusband Discussion Group” was set up to ensure that the Report’s recommendations were fully discussed. This Group lobbied the Carnegie Trust to support the establishment of a “general training for social work, following the basic social science course”. It also ensured that ASW together with five other professional associations approached the Carnegie Trust in February 1953 “to do all in their power to make it possible for experimental work to be carried out in accordance with these recommendations”. Hartshorn in her study of the establishment of the first generic course in this country in 1954 argues that “it is probably no exaggeration to say that one of its (that is – ASW’s) most important single achievements in respect to training was its assumption of leadership among the professional associations which resulted in their combined efforts in 1953 to win the desired assistance from the Carnegie Trust” (Harthorn 1982,p.57).

2.9. In addition to this concern with generic training ASW also continued BFSW’s commitment to the training of student supervisors. A school for supervisors was run in Sheffield in 1952; with a further seminar on supervision in Birmingham in 1955. Both these schools published reports which disseminated the material to a much wider audience. But the Training Committee and ASW also took the initiative in organising a whole series of conferences and seminars which led to publications and further developments throughout the 1950s. These included a conference on the ethics of social work in 1952; a pioneering conference on groupwork in 1954; a seminar of recent developments in casework in 1956; and a conference on morals and
the social worker in 1959. ASW also published an address by Eileen Younghusband on “Basic Training for Casework” (1952), and an address by Professor Charlotte Towle on “Generic Trends in Education for Social Work” (1955). These publications were a major contribution to the sparse literature which existed in Britain at that time, and were eagerly used by the many taring courses which developed in the 1950s and 1960s.

2.10. Like the other major professional associations, ASW welcomed the establishment of the Younghusband Committee in 1956, and it prepared and sent evidence to this Committee which had been established to examine the need for social work in health and welfare departments (B5/4:152). By the time that the Younghusband Committee’s Report was published in 1959, the Joint Training Council (see section 3) was being established, but the Association welcomed the main recommendations of the Report and called for their speedy implementation (B5/5:19). The Association actively lobbied both Government and Opposition parties before and during the passing of the Social Worker Training Act (B5/5:29), and they also continued to monitor the new Certificate in Social Work courses which were established.

2.11. The Training Committee were helped in their lobbying tactics by a Watch Committee which had emerged onto the ASW scene in 1958. This had been formed as a result of discussions which had agreed that some machinery needed to be set up to better coordinate social workers’ points of view to Parliament (B5/4:167). The Committee proposed that one member should act as a “spotter” to check all Government Bills for relevance to social work, whilst three other members would liaise with each parliamentary party (B5/4:100). Although these ambitious plans were not realised the Watch Committee did become established and was important in coordinating the Association’s response to both the Younghusband Report and the Ingleby report published in 1961. None of these activities so far described were particularly new or radical (with the exception of the support for the generic training course) but the feature which made ASW distinct in the 1950s was its commitment to an eventual unification of social work and it is to an examination of this that I turn in the next section.

3. Early moves towards unification.

3.1. The topic which sparked off the whole chain of events which was eventually to lead to the formation of BASW in 1970 was the issue of “registration”. Working Paper 4 has already illustrated how the Government’s attempts to register almoners and PSWs as “professions supplementary to medicine” following the Cope and MacIntosh Reports of 1951, had made this a live issue for social workers, and the AGM. Of ASW in 1953 instructed its Council to call together representatives of professional social work to discuss this subject. On 6th July 1953, representatives from ten associations (including the Almoners, Children’s Officer, Child Care Officers and PSWs – then not affiliated to ASW) agreed to set up a Study Committee of seven social workers (B5/4:70). This Committee held ten meetings from July 1953 to September 1954, and drew up a questionnaire for circulation throughout the country. It also collected evidence on the development of registration
schemes for social workers in other countries, and on the development of other professional groups in Britain. In this it was assisted by having the services of Mrs. Margaret Attlee as honorary secretary. Even before the Report was completed the major points about registration had been rehearsed in public, when, in the first issue of Case Conference in May 1954, Joan Eyden and Una Cormack (ASW’s representatives on the Registration Committee) wrote an article “Registration – The Next Step?”. In this article they outlined their own expectations of a profession and argued that “training, registration, traditions of behaviour, professionalisation, professional association all hang together as part of the organisation of social work” (Eyden & Cormack 1954).

3.2. The final Report of the Registration Committee – “Registration and the Social Worker” – after outlining the evidence that it had collected, went onto examine the advantages and disadvantages of registration and to discuss the various forms registration could take. Whilst it did not consider that it was part of the duty of the Committee to recommend, or advise against, registration; it did conclude that registration was a practicable step towards the solution of many of the difficulties then besetting social work. But it also warned that unless certain conditions were observed, registration might be ineffective or even futile and it could even be a potential threat to professional development if in the wrong hands (ASW 1954). The Report was widely welcomed by the Associations which had commissioned it and ASW agreed to print and circulate the Report widely. The circulation included the County Councils Association; the Municipal Councils Association and the London County Council; and ASW reported that all had expressed interest, “although some were slightly condescending” (B5/4:146). The original group of ten associations constituted itself in 1955 as a Standing Conference on Registration to consider either what preliminary steps were necessary before a Register of Social Workers could be introduced, or “what other steps could be taken to achieve the same objects viz: the development of social work as a profession” (ASW Annual Report 1956). In pursuit of the first object the Standing Conference sent out another questionnaire which produced a response of 230 answers, generally favouring the establishment of a voluntary register (B5/4:81). It also noted that Mrs. Rogers of Manchester University was carrying out a pilot survey of social workers to discover how many social workers were employed and what their qualifications were. This information was considered essential before any effort could be put into the establishment of a register; and the Standing Conference then turned its attention to the second object of examining alternative strategies. The Report on Registration had identified training as “the crux” of the matter (ASW 1954 p.21), and this now became the central focus of the Standing Conference.

3.3. The drive here came for the establishment of a Joint Training Council to enable social workers in different branches of social work to join together in working out and formulating standards for practical training and for supervision at different levels, and the Standing Conference put forward the advantages and possibilities of such a Training Council to its constituent bodies for discussion (ASW Annual Report 1956). In debating this proposal the ASW were concerned that the work already being done by a joint
committee on family casework training for students and by a group of university teachers organised under the JUC by Miss Black, should not lead to duplication of effort; but since the first of these bodies supported the proposal for a Joint Training Council, and the latter group had been leaderless since the death of Miss Black, the ASW at their executive meeting in September 1957 recommended support for a Training Council, which ASW would be prepared to administer (B5/4:159). At the same meeting it was stressed that the concern for training, salary negotiations and registration were all connected, and ASW demonstrated their commitment to this approach by offering a £100 towards the expenses of a Joint Training Council in its first year. A report on the Feasibility of a Joint Training Council was published in July 1958. This outlined the aims and objectives of the new body (see Appendix 1) and suggested that the Council should comprise three representatives from each of 10 associations, with representatives of the JUC also being appointed. Ideally the body would have an independent chairman and would be serviced by a full-time officer (B5/4:100a). Whilst ASW unanimously supported this report, other professional associations were more cautious. Some felt accreditation of agencies more important, others were unhappy about the involvement of the JUC; whilst NAPO was already reporting a difference of opinion within its membership with some members wanting to lessen probation’s identification with social work (B5/4:102). ASW continued to force the pace, proposing at the May 1959 meetings of the Standing Conference on Registration that the Joint Training Council should be established (B5/5:74), and on 16th October 1959 the inaugural meeting of the Joint Training Council was finally held.

3.4. The establishment of the JTC coincided with the publication of the Younghusband Report on Social Workers in Health and Welfare Departments; and the steering committee of the JTC established three working parties, one of which was to focus solely on the Younghusband Report. The other two were to consider the theoretical and practical components of existing training courses; and were to review the position of social work as a career and the steps necessary to achieve professional status (S5/1:39). These very ambitious briefs were gradually narrowed, and the JTC embarked on a period of six years existence until in 1965 it was reconstituted at the Education and Training Committee of the Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers (SCOSW). A great deal of the work of the JTC was carried on through working parties, with the Council itself receiving and commenting on the reports of these groups. Statements on “the Teaching of Settings to Students on Professional Casework Courses”, and on “Social Work as a Profession” were issued. I do not intend to carry out a detailed analysis of the JTC’s activities in this paper, but the JTC is important as an example of the various professional associations drawing closer together; working on common policy/ statements, with the support and drive of the ASW sustaining them.

3.5. This linear development from Standing Conference on Registration to JTC was paralleled by other debates within ASW and the professional associations about the need for unity amongst social workers. The Association of Child Care officers (ACCO) had met with ASW in early 1955 to
suggest that ASW might have a major role to play for other associations in the “protective” task of dealing with conditions of work and salaries (B5/4:7). This had been reinforced by Mr. Dawtry’s comments in May 1955 that ultimately ASW might become the negotiating body for all branches of social work (B5/4:79). This prompted ASW to set up a Negotiating Sub-Committee in 1955, which reported in November 1956. This Report outlined the existing negotiating machinery of the different associations and examined the options of ASW becoming a Trade Union or at least acting as a negotiator for the other associations. Although the Report felt that there was much to be said for one negotiating body as the ultimate objective, since it would help promote professional unity and give it more say in training; the ASW Council in the end favoured using the existing negotiating machinery (in many cases NALGO) (B5/4:85). Although little came of this initiative it again displays the drawing together of the associations in matters of common concern with ASW playing a leading role.

3.6. ASW also conducted its own internal debates about the future development of professional associations of social workers. In September 1955 the Council was addressed by Mrs. Inlow, the Fulbright Professor of Social Work, on the subject of the recently established National Association of Social Workers of America (B5/4:80) and ASW was considerably strengthened in their resolve for unity by the affiliation of the Institute of Almoners and ACCO, and the re-affiliation of APSW in 1957. When ASW came to review its own constitution in 1959/60, it was faced with a dilemma. Only by retaining individual membership could ASW remain solvent, but some of the affiliated associations were looking to ASW as a federating association, conceding some functions that ASW could perform better than they could individually. The more successfully ASW performed this latter role, the less incentive there was for members of affiliated associations to join ASW as individual members. Yet ASW felt that its playing a federating role was premature, since it provided “unique opportunities for individual members for identifying with one profession of social work” (B5/5:76). The dilemma sparked off a major debate within ASW about the aims and objects of ASW itself, and led to a redrafting of the Association’s constitution. However the Council was still very wary about taking on more of a unifying role itself (B5/5:21).

3.7. The debate finally crystallised in a letter from Reg Wright, a member of APSW, to Case Conference in March 1961 in which he suggested that ASW could not continue to be both a federating body and a professional association in its own right. ASW responded to the challenge by initiating a round of discussions with all its affiliated associations on the future organisation of the social work profession (B5/5:24). A memorandum – “The Situation Facing the Professional Social Work Organisations” was circulated in May 1961 to all the other Associations. This suggested various possibilities:- a federal association of specialist organisations; a national association of professionally trained social workers with specialist sections; a national association based on individual and affiliated membership; or a continuation of the present situation. The various Associations met on June 23rd 1961 and reconvened after consulting their own membership in October 1961. This meeting favoured the
establishment of a new federation of organisations of social workers, with ASW becoming a body composed solely of individual members and therefore eligible to be a member of the proposed federation (B5/5:85). The meeting established a working party, which reported to the ASW Council in May 1962.

3.8. The report recommended unequivocally that the long-term objective was the establishment of a unified national association of social workers based on a minimum standard of qualification for membership. Development along these lines was seen as a rational outcome to the growing tendency towards blurring and overlapping of boundaries between different fields of work, the increasing movement of social workers between fields, and the development of generic training. A formal Federation was not felt to be desirable, since this could delay eventual unity. Instead a Standing Conference was proposed which would be the means of acting as an interchange between associations and coordinating activities; developing common policies on issues affecting social workers as a whole; and furthering training for social work. Membership would be limited to organisations which “were prepared to accept each other”; which had an acceptable standard of qualification; and which were national bodies (not sub-groups based on geography, employer or specialist interests – this the Association of LCC Child Care organisers, and the Association of Children’s Moral Welfare Workers were excluded. ASW would become an association of individual members, acting as a “holding” organisation for social workers trained on the new CSW (Younghusband) Courses (B5/5:32).

3.9. After a further period of consultation, SCOSW was formally established on 22nd February 1963, with an initial membership of seven associations – the Association of Child Care Officers ACCO); the Association of General and Family Caseworkers (AGFCW); the Association of Moral Welfare Workers (AMWW); the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers (APSW); the Association of Social Workers (ASW); the Institute of Almoners (IoA) and the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO).


4.1. The full Standing Conference of organisations met on average five times per year. Each organisation was represented on SCOSW by three of its members, with larger organisations having increased representation (one additional representative for 500 members, two for 1,000) Thus the IoA and NAPO had 5 representatives each; ACCO and APSW -4; and AGFCW, ASW and AMWW -3 each. Various other associations of workers made approaches to SACOSW for membership, but only one – the Society of Mental Welfare Officers (SMWO) was accepted in March 1964, thus bringing the number of organisations to 8. Approaches by the national Association of Home Teachers for the Blind; the Institute of Welfare Officers; and the Institute fo Social Welfare were rejected. The Standing Conference was financed by its constituent bodies, thus in its first year of operation the organisations paid £3 per 100 members. Although SCOSW considered appeals to Trust Funds to raise more income, they were unsuccessful in this endeavour, except for a very specific appeal to set up a Social Work Advisory Service (see 4.8 below). Consequently SCOSW was limited in what it could do due to shortage of
funds. Fees to constituent organisations went up in 1965 to £6 per 100 members for the first 500, and £3 per 100 thereafter; and also Case Conference gave a generous donation from 1965 onwards. In January 1966, the chairman issued a once-and-for-all appeal to members, and over £1,500 was donated, which enabled SCOSW to employ a part-time secretary. Despite this financial stringency however, SCOSW was able to get through a remarkable amount of work in its short existence.

4.2. In between Council meetings, the affairs of SCOSW were run by a General Purposes Committee and by a series of committees and working parties. At its first meeting SCOSW agreed that the Joint Training Council should operate as its Training Committee; and it appointed two further committees – a Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee, and an International Relations Committee (S3/1:3). Suggestions for further working groups proliferated and SCOSW soon began to take on extra functions, so much so that in March 1965 some members raised the question “as to when the future of the Standing Conference would be discussed rather than so much extraneous business” (S3/1:25). In reading the records of SCOSW this tension is constantly present – between enlarging its own role and operations, and its task of working towards a single, unified professional association. This section will examine this latter task first.

4.3. The first year’s activities were generally directed towards consolidating SCOSW’s position as “an authoritative body with adequate resources and facilities for research and executive action, before entering into an increasing number of negotiations which may well be complex, protracted and sometimes controversial (Annual Report 1963). Despite this bland aim it was clear that after twelve months certain organisations, particularly NAPO, were concerned about the direction SCOSW was going. In March 1964 the NAPO representative on the General Purposes Committee voiced NAPO’s disquiet over statements which were taken to imply that within five years SCOSW would take over the functions of the individual organisations (S3/1:108). The discussion following this revealed that some organisations wanted swifter progress to unity. However when the General Purposes Committee of SCOSW met with the National Executive of NAPO in July 1964, it was clear that SCOSW was moving more rapidly towards unification than NAPO was prepared to go (S3/1:182). When the General Purposes Committee of SCOSW met ASW in October 1964, they got an entirely different message – progress towards unification was too slow for ASW (S3/1:183). Between March 1965 and August 1965, the General Purposes Committee met with the other six organisations. The outcome of these discussions revealed six associations (ACCO, AFCW, APSW, ASW, IMSW, and SMWO) in favour of a unified association of individual members with specialist sub-sections as the ultimate objective; one association (NAPO) in favour of federation, leaving complete sovereignty with the constituent organisations; and one association (AMWW) undecided (S3/1:29a). An alliance of ASW, ACCO and AFCW continued to pressure for action and in October 1965 a working party was established on the “Future Organisation of Social Workers” (S31/:30).
4.4. This working party produced its report – SCOSW Discussion Paper No.2 in November 1966. The Report discusses the reasons for combining the existing social workers’ associations, and then goes on to detail the debate between a federation or one unified association. After putting forward plans for the shape that either of these two solutions might take, it then makes a brief recommendation – “after consideration of all the issues the majority of members of the Working Party in their personal capacities, not as representatives of their organisations, commend to their organisations the second alternative, i.e. one united association with specialist sub-sections” (SCOSW 1966). The report concluded with a list of questions for discussion. The document was circulated to every individual member of each organisation, and at a meeting of Standing Conference in May 1967, after a process of consultation with their members, seven organisations committed themselves to unification, only NAPO remaining in favour of federation (S3/1:44). In July 1967 the Conference formally resolved “to proceed immediately with negotiations for the formation of one unified association of trained social workers, with the aim of agreeing a constitution by 1st July 1968” (S3/1:46). The detailed planning was left to a small constitutional sub-committee; but the wider membership did continue to debate certain broad issues – the need for and the composition of specialist sections; the position, qualifications and rights of associate members; and the local and regional structure of the new association. Even the name of the new association was debated. After the draft constitution was accepted in May 1968, detailed planning for BASW came to dominate many of the meetings. This planning was to take a further year, and the final constitution of BASW was not agreed until April 1969. In the meantime a General Secretary of BASW – Kenneth Brill was appointed in March 1969; and three Assistant General Secretaries – Mrs. Dobie (APSW); Miss Kelly (IMSW) and Mr. Bilton (ACCO) were similarly appointed in May 1969. At the end of the day NAPO voted to remain independent of BASW, although 775 probation officers did join the new Association. SCOSW held its last meeting on 15th May 1970.

4.5. If the planning of the new association of social workers was the ultimate aim and achievement of SCOSW, the second major issue which dominated SCOSW activities in these seven years, was the restructuring of the personal social services. As early as April 1964, SCOSW gave its support to Lord Amulree’s motion in the House of Lords calling for a “further study of welfare services to ensure that the best use is made of the limited number of people involved” (S3/1:109); but the debate within SCOSW came to a head with the report of a working party, set up in July 1964, to prepare evidence for the Plowden Committee on Education. When the Standing Conference discussed this evidence in January 1965, their main focus was Appendix III of the evidence – a closely argued paper entitled “A social work service for schools: the case for integration”. This was described by some members as “brilliant and far-seeing”; but NAPO and APSW blocked its inclusion in the evidence to Plowden since they argued that not all members would support it (S3/1:23). However the Standing Conference did agree that this paper, together with the report of a Conference on “Care in the Community”, held in the Autumn of 1964, which had also identified the existing structure of the personal social services as an obstacle to the development of community care; should form
the basis for a major conference, held in May 1965 on the topic “Care in the Community – Towards an Integrated Social Work Service?” (S3/1:89a). Delegates to the conference, which was led by Miss E.M. Goldberg, also received a paper from Richard Titmuss on the issue. The discussion produced in this meeting was comprehensive and wide-ranging, with doubts about the viability and effectiveness of an integrated service being expressed, as well as broad support for the proposal (S3/1:26). The result of the conference was the drafting of SCOSW Discussion paper No. 1 – “The Reorganisation of Social Work Services”, which was circulated to all members of the constituent organisations. The paper outlined various patterns for the reorganisation of social services and raised a series of questions for debate by the membership.

4.6. Thus SCOSW played their part in initiating and forwarding debate about an issue which became central in social work later in the year when the Government, in the White paper “The Child, the Family and the Young Offender”, announced that they would set up a committee to review interdepartmental cooperation. A working party prepared evidence for this body – the Seebohm Committee, but as Mrs. McDougall commented “whilst the Working Party wished to make a useful and significant contribution to discussion of controversial matters, it could not say anything which would conflict with the known views of constituent organisations and so be rejected by the full Standing Conference” (S3/1:128). The five pages of evidence finally submitted to the Seebohm Committee, traced developments in social work since 1948 and emphasised the competence developed by social workers and the contribution they could make to any reorganised service (S3/1:35a). Each constituent organisation also submitted their own evidence to the Committee.

4.7. The Standing Conference met the day after the publication of the Seebohm Report in July 1968, and issued a short agreed statement welcoming the Report; but the main response to the report was left to another Seebohm Working Group, which also considered the Green paper of the NHS which had been published at the same time (S3/1:158). This group focussed on concerns about the ratio of social workers to the population; the generic/specialist worker; the central Government Department best suited to oversee developments; the appropriate person to be a Chief Officer of a Social Services Department; social work in hospitals; training; and the date of implementation (S3/1:59). ACCO took a leading role in pressuring SCOSW to become involved in political action in support of the Seebohm Report, and at a meeting on 14th January 1969, a broad alliance of SCOSW organisations, together with the Association of Children’s Officers, the Association of Directors of Welfare Services, the Institute of Social Welfare, the Association Social Work Teachers, the Family Service Units, and the national Corporation for the Care of Old People, formed themselves into the Seebohm Implementation Action Group (SIAG) (S3/1:195). This group acted on behalf of SCOSW in lobbying parliamentarians, and in dealing with local attempts by some authorities to reorganise their services along different lines and in advance of general legislation. This was clearly one of the best organised and most effective campaigns mounted by social work associations to influence government policy.
4.8. Whilst the issues of forming a unified association and pressurising for an integrated service dominated the SCOSW agenda, other issues were not entirely neglected. One initiative in which SCOSW played a major role was in the establishment of the Social Work Advisory Service. This cause had been supported by SCOSW since July 1963, and it was active in approaching Trust Funds for financial aid and in organising support for such a service from a number of other organisations. The Service was finally established in May 1966, financed by a grant of £25,000 from the Gulbenkian Foundation, with David Hobman, who had been acting as honorary information officer for SCOSW, as its Director. The Council of Management of the Service contained a majority of its members nominated by SCOSW (Annual Report 1966). Over its first three years, attendance by SCOSW members at the Management Council gradually decreased, whilst attendance by central government and local authority members increased, and after the Gulbenkian grant ran out, the service was financed by grant aid from central and local government, with SCOSW playing a more minor role. SCOSW also formed close links with other parts of the generic social work mosaic which was developing in the 1960s, particularly with the National Institute for Social Work Training (established 1961) and the National Children’s Bureau (established in 1963).

4.9. Although the International Relations Committee of SCOSW functioned quite smoothly during this period, being increasingly concerned with reciprocal recognition of overseas social work qualifications, SCOSW had more problems with its other two standing committees. Following the establishment of SCOSW the Joint Training Council appeared to go through a crisis of identity and much of 1964 was spent discussing what the Council should do and how it should relate to SCOSW. At a meeting in January 1965 the difficulties were acknowledged of “uncertainty and confusion regarding the role of the JTC; organisational problems; lack of resources to implement various promising lines of action effectively; the real difficulty of many of the tasks faced by the JTC; and a lowering of morale resulting from the combination of these factors” (S5/1:38). SCOSW then replaced the JTC by a smaller Training and Education Committee. This committee functioned more effectively, producing supplementary evidence for the Seebohm Committee on training (S3/1:134) and focussing on developing a training policy for SCOSW and eventually BASW. In February 1967, it recognised that it had tended to become dominated by teachers of social work, and a positive effort was made to get more fieldwork practitioners onto the committee (S3/1:139). The preparation of the document “Essentials of Training for Social Work” occupied most of its efforts, this document eventually forming the BASW initial training policy.

4.10. The Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee of SCOSW set up in February 1963, also had its problems, although its crisis of identity did not occur until the summer of 1965, when many of its prominent members withdrew from participation due to overwork (S3/1:121). The Committee were concerned about how far they were empowered to pronounce in letters to the press on behalf of SCOSW and the general Purposes Committee were similarly concerned about how few Standing Conference members were on
the Parliamentary Committee (S3/1:127). Following further debate the committee was not reappointed at SCOSW’s AGM in May 1966 (S3/1:92). This did not spell the end of SCOSW’s role in affecting parliament as paragraph 4.7 above has demonstrated; and the Standing Conference did continue to produce evidence for other government committees. In its seven years of existence evidence was sent to the Heyworth Committee on Social Studies (1964); the Maud and Mallaby Committees (1965); the Plowden Committee (1965); the Seebohm Committee (1966); the Commons Committee on the Social Work (Scotland) Bill (1968) and the Francis Committee on Rents (1970).

4.11.. One issue which the ASW pressed on SCOSW was the need for the registration of social workers, and SCOSW set up its own working party to consider “the desirability and practicability of registration and the timing of any action recommended” (S3/1:110). Using the previous ASW document on registration as a base, this working party produced a new report, a shortened version of which was circulated to all members of constituent organisations in April 1968 as the third and final discussion paper from SCOSW. In July 1966, five members of SCOSW met representatives of the Ministry of Health and the three statutory training councils to discuss the issue. The meeting recognised the major problems of blanketing in so many untrained workers or of excluding them; and other difficulties of timing, and linking approved courses with registration were covered (S3/1:191). In the event, as Malherbe has commented, “members of the constituent organisations appeared to find the Discussion Paper on Registration confusing and no clear mandate was given on whether or not to move ahead quickly on registration” (Malherbe 1979, p.15). The next stage in the registration debate was left to BASW.

4.12. After the dissolution of the Parliamentary Committee in 1966, SCOSW became increasingly concerned with the problems of communicating with the whole of their membership. The Conference recognised that the commitment of a small number of officers of the various constituent organisations might not necessarily be representative of the whole membership. In February 1966 they instituted the practice of publishing a Standing Conference Bulletin in Case Conference, which was also reproduced in other social work journals, such as medical Social Work. Similarly from January 1968 they recommended that local groups of SCOSW could be encouraged, but should only include people who would subsequently be eligible for membership (S3/1:151). They also established a Scottish sub-group of SCOSW in July 1967 to consider Scottish participation in the proposed national association, as well as the reorganisation of social services in Scotland. This group took over the detailed work of commenting on the structural changes taking place in Scotland (S3/1:145). By these methods a wider number of members were gradually drawn into participation in SCOSW.


5.1. ASW’s role in the formation of SCOSW has already been discussed, but the formation of SCOSW also had implications for ASW’s organisation and activities. ASW became purely an association of individual members: and at
its Council meeting in May 1963 it had to consider its committee structure. The Watch Committee was dissolved, since its role would be taken over by the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee of SCOSW, and the International Committee was also dissolved, being replaced by the SCOSW International Relations Committee. Only the Training Committee remained, and this had its name changed to Education Committee (B5/5:38). SCOSW had also agreed that ASW should become a “holding” association for CSW trained social workers, and this led to an influx of new members (B5/5:100). ASW also recognised those holding the Diploma of the National College for the Training of Youth Leaders at Leicester as eligible for membership (B5/5:45). However they turned down a request to blanket all members of the Prison Governors Association into membership, whilst being willing to receive applications from specific Governors as individuals (B5/5:108). Another group received into membership were members of the Association of Part-time Social Workers, which had been formed in 1960 and which merged with ASW on 1st January 1967 (B5/5:114). But ASW’s rather catholic interpretation of “social work” did mean that not all their associates could reasonably be blanketed into membership of BASW in 1970, and they had to review their associate membership in 1969 to determine which members would be eligible for full BASW membership (B5/5:120). Membership of ASW grew during this period reaching 1,672 at the end of 1968.

5.2. During the life of SCOSW, ASW was one of the major associations pressing for speedy movement towards a unified association. They pressed SCOSW into taking action on registration (B5/5:40 & 98); they expressed concern that the Education and Training Committee of SCOSW was not functioning adequately in 1967 (B5/5:61); and they were unhappy about the proposed “sections” within BASW, feeling that these may divide the new association (B5/5:68). Although a lot of ASWs efforts were devoted to the work of SCOSW and acting as a watchdog over SCOSW’s activities; ASW also developed its own activities during this period.

5.3. One feature of ASW’s activities which affected a wider constituency than its own membership was its organisation of a series of highly successful national conferences in alternate years. The association had organised an international symposium on mental health in 1961; and this was followed by “New Thinking for Changing Needs” (1963); “New Thinking about Administration” (1965); “New Thinking about Institutional Care” (1967); and “New Thinking about Welfare” (1969). In each case a conference report was published which enjoyed wide circulation. The Education Committee of ASW also jointly organised a series of seminars in social casework or other topics with the Extra-Mural Department of London University each year, which proved extremely popular, often being over-subscribed. Finally in the area of education, ASW was successful in negotiating with the Goldsmiths’ Company the establishment of a scheme of bursaries to assist social workers to attend conferences (B5/5:46). This scheme was administered by ASW from 1964 to 1970, and assisted with both national and international conferences.

5.4. Although ASW initially disbanded its Watch Committee in 1963, it continued to be concerned with broader social policy issues. In 1964 debate
centred on the operations of the National Assistance Board, and particularly the operation of the "wage stop" (B5/5:100). ASW agreed to set up a Research and Study Group to examine this and the related problems of the low income of some large families (B5/5:46). This group circulated ASW branches for information on this issue, but the group unfortunately fizzled out in 1965, when no-one would become chairman of the group (B5/5:55). However in April 1966, ASW reconstituted a Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee of its own to "a) set up and maintain liaison with Parliament; b) implement and publicise decisions made by the Council; c) keep a watch on newspapers and journals so that the case of social work should not go by default; d) collate evidence for committees of inquiry; and e) deal with other matters referred by Council" (B5/5:58). This committee was successful in developing links with members of both Houses of Parliament; and considered such issues as the reform of the Adoption Laws and the problems of homeless persons accommodation in Kent. They also engaged in establishing more effective contacts with the various television networks (Annual Report 1967). Evidence was submitted by ASW to the Heywood Committee on Social Studies (1964), and to the Seebohm Committee (1966). ASW also became actively involved in the Seebohm Implementation Action Group.

5.5. During these years, ASW continued to keep in touch with its membership through ASW News, published quarterly in Case Conference. However the big change in activities from the 1950s, was the growth of local Branch activity. An increasing amount of the Annual Report was devoted to the activities of local branches. The 1964 Report indicates well-established branches in Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Leicester, London, Nottingham and Sheffield; by 1968 – Glasgow, Devon & Cornwall, Durham, East Anglia, Harlow, Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire, Liverpool, North-East, North-West Midlands, Teeside and Northern Ireland had joined the list (Annual Reports 1964 & 1968). The activities included local meetings, one-day conferences, engaging in local pressure group activities; and outreach meetings for students on professional training courses. In many cases joint meetings were held with other associations, particularly with AFCW and ACCO, after agreement over closer cooperation between them had been reached in January 1966 (B5/5:57).

5.6. Inevitably the final two years of ASW were a time of preparation for the formation of BASW. As the association which inherited many of the generic ideals of BFSW, the achievement of a unified professional association in 1970 was the culmination of the dreams of those who kept ASW alive in the early 1950s. But the achievement of creating BASW had required more than dreams, and, as this paper has demonstrated, the commitment of and the goading by ASW was a vital ingredient to this success.

Andrew Sackville
**Sources.**

**Manuscript sources.**


Miscellaneous papers relating to ASW, JTC and SCOSW.

**Printed sources.**


ASW Publications (see full listing in Appendix II)


SCOSW Discussion Papers
  No.1 The Reorganisation of Social Work Services 1965.
  No.3. Registration 1968.

**Other references.**

  Case Conference Vol.1. No.1. 1954

Waldron, F.E. “The Association of Social Workers”
  Case Conference Vol.5. No.7. 1959.

Wright, R. “Future Plans”
  Caes Conference Vol.7. No.9.. 1961

Malherbe, M. “Accreditation in Social Work”
  CCETSW 1979.

Hartshorn, A.E. “Milestone in Education for Social Work”
Appendix I.

**Aims and Objectives of the Joint Training Council as proposed in 1958.**

1. To bring together representative social workers in different fields, whose aim is the profession of social work based on appropriate university and professional training; to establish procedures for continuing study of the context and standards of training for professional social workers with due regard to its different components and levels and to differing functions of universities and professional bodies in their respective fields; and to work out together the essential requirements of this training.

2. To promote discussion between university teachers, supervisors of practical work, and representatives of other bodies concerned in training for social work, with a view to closer understanding and cooperation and in particular, to closer integration of practical and theoretical training.

3. To offer a consultant advisory service on training in social work at different levels, with a view to the achievement and recognition of appropriate standards of training.

Appendix II

**Publications of ASW (in chronological order) 1952-1969.**


“Children Neglected or Ill-treated in Their Own Home” ASW Care of Children Committee, January 1953.


“Children Away from Home” ASW Care of Children Committee, March 1954.


“A Report on Registration and the Social Worker” 1955


Printed evidence.


Evidence submitted to the Departmental Committee on Children and Young Persons (Ingleby Committee) May 1958.