



The Advocate

The Newsletter for the MSW Student Organization

September 2001

Rhode Island College School of Social Work www.ric.edu/mswso

Welcome MSW Students!

Welcome to the Master of Social Work Student Organization!

The MSWO would like to extend a warm welcome to students, faculty and colleagues to a new academic year. The MSWSO offers a resource and support to students that can not be overstated. We invite first and second years students to join this long standing organization. We look forward to meeting new members and old at the next meeting. The following are reasons to join the organization and become involved. The MSWSO:

- Advocates for students' rights, needs and concerns to enhance the educational experience.
- Serves as a liaison between the MSW and BSW student organizations.
- Serves as a liaison between the MSW students and the faculty.
- Is used as a vehicle for change and challenge of policies.
- Provides mutual support for its members.
- Provides a network for MSW students.
- Engages in social or educational activities in accordance with NASW Code of Ethics

Returning to school or entering school for the first time presents numerous opportunities to network and develop collegial relationships. A point to ponder is this, the person sitting next to you in class may end up being your colleague or potentially your boss after you graduate. This is not the time to be near sighted. You will do yourself a disservice to think just about graduate school as a means to an end. It is never about just the diploma. Graduate school is about improving advocacy and organizing skills to help our clients and society. Graduate school is about improving our knowledge of human behavior, diversity and oppression. Understanding and appreciating your colleagues is part and parcel for life after school.

My point, and there is one, is to think of graduate school as building a foundation, not just chasing a grade or a piece of paper with initials. You decide how strong your foundation will be. Will it be straw or brick? I think you get the analogy.

The MSWSO offers students a chance to reinforce the foundation. Remember this foundation travels with you. This is your welcome, a heads up so to speak, to think past graduation and entertain the notion that your time here matters for the future.

Louise d. MacLellan MSWSO

□ MSWSO Officers □

Louise MacLellan, *President* Judith Gorman *Treasurer* Jennifer Klyberg, *Co-secretary*
Patricia Greene, *Co-Secretary* Randy Oftedahl, *newsletter & website* Nancy Gewirtz, *Faculty Advisor*



Attention First Year Students

We are currently seeking first year MSW students to be CO-officers to the MSWSO. Part-time or full-time student members of the organization may run for office. Working with officers from first and second year students encourages a collaborative relationship that benefits all involved. Members interested, or know someone that is, please submit your name and the office you are seeking in writing to any member of the MSWO. An election sheet is posted in the student lounge as an alternative way to elect officers. Positions we are seeking to fill are: Co-president, Co-vice president, Co-secretary, Co-treasurer. When elected you will work in tandem with the current officers. The date of the election will be posted in the student lounge. If interested, please contact the MSWSO for more information.

Here is an example of what the MSWSO accomplished last year...

The MSWSO Victory List!!

- ◆ Participated in decisions and gave input into the new MSW curriculum
- ◆ Appointed representatives to attend MSW faculty meetings so that students can have a voice in important school-related decisions
- ◆ Successfully advocated for students who wanted their course to be classroom-based versus on-line.
- ◆ Established the Cheryl Ann Metrey Memorial Fund, a scholarship fund that will provide financial support to future social work students
- ◆ Created an MSWSO website (www.ric.edu/mswso) with a direct link from the Rhode Island College School of Social Work home page.
- ◆ Co-sponsored a picnic for all School of Social Work students on August 31st
- ◆ Provided input into the MSW/BSW Evaluation Standards Survey (to be distributed to students soon!)
- ◆ Expanded upon "THE ADVOCATE," a monthly newsletter for all MSW students at Rhode Island College
- ◆ Successfully (!) lobbied Senator Chafee to reject President Bush's repeal of the Estate Tax...

The Next Meeting of the MSWSO....

is yet to be decided...

Please let us know what days/times work for you!

Email RedSoxJudy@aol.com

Have YOUR voice heard!

Join the MSWSO

...become an active part of this vibrant

ADDENDUM: The article on mascot.com that appears on the next page of this newsletter is by Louise



Mascot.com...
What were they
Thinking??

I received a call from a friend the other day. She started the conversation with “So your birthday is coming up...I know where you live” and gave me other demographic details about my life, i.e., DOB, unlisted home phone number, street address and noted that infamous school photo I.D. I immediately hung up the phone and turned on the computer to locate the site, Mascot.com. I was to say the least mortified and angry. Who gave this site my information? When did I give the OK for this? Yes, yes, we all received the mailing from Gary M. Penfield, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students. Mascot.com looks benign enough on the surface, even a helpful resource for students, but no one asked me. It touts that it is password -protected and available only to authorized users. This translates to any student, faculty Member or person who knows your name and last four digits of your social security number can access this site. Penfield further states that the Mascot Directory gives you “complete control over what information you want to share with others”. Sure this is true, you can go in and block your information but only after your private information has been posted. This appears a little backwards. I would have had more control if I was given

the option to post my information in the first place. I was not afforded this luxury.

Why the concern? I am not histrionic by nature but I do become annoyed when people indiscriminately take personal information and share it freely without asking permission. There are several concerns with this site; the most obvious are highlighted below.

Concern #1 As social workers there is even a greater concern, confidentiality. Working with clients the rule of thumb is that a social workers personal information is rarely shared with clients. This is done for safety, ethical and personal reasons. Your information is out there and you may choose to block it.

Concern #2 Stalking or unwanted attention. Many individuals keep their information confidential for a reason. Safety should have been thought about prior to the posting of personal information.

Concern #3 Why are the SSW faculty mysteriously absent on Mascot.com? Were they given a choice to post or not post their information? If they were offered this option, why? Is their confidentiality more important than ours; if so, why?

Concern #4 All of the information needed to access your personal files at the RIC computer lab is available on Mascot.com. If your information remains un-blocked anyone can enter your RIC data system. No doubt, this compromises your security at the RIC site, allowing access to your personal account and documents.

The MSWSO is offering assistance to students that wish to block their personal information on Mascot.com. We are also curious about your response to Mascot.com: do you agree or disagree that your privacy was ignored or is this site non-problematic for you? Feel free to respond to this editorial for the next edition of the **Advocate** by sending your response to randy@oftedahl.com or placing your response in an MSWSO members mail box.



Your ideas, feedback, and comments are always WELCOME!!

Send us your comments on **The Advocate**, MSWSO, or life as an MSW Student. Contact an MSWSO officer, or send e-mail to our Newsletter Coordinator at randy@oftedahl.com and/or put a note in the MSWSO mailbox (located in the School of Social Work building, 2nd floor, across from faculty mailboxes)



Cartoon from www.solidarity.com/hkcartoons

The ADVOCATE lists outside events, conferences, and notices of interests to social work students and activists. Send your event to randy@oftedahl.com or drop in the MSWSO mailbox in the student lounge.

Protest at the IMF/World Bank

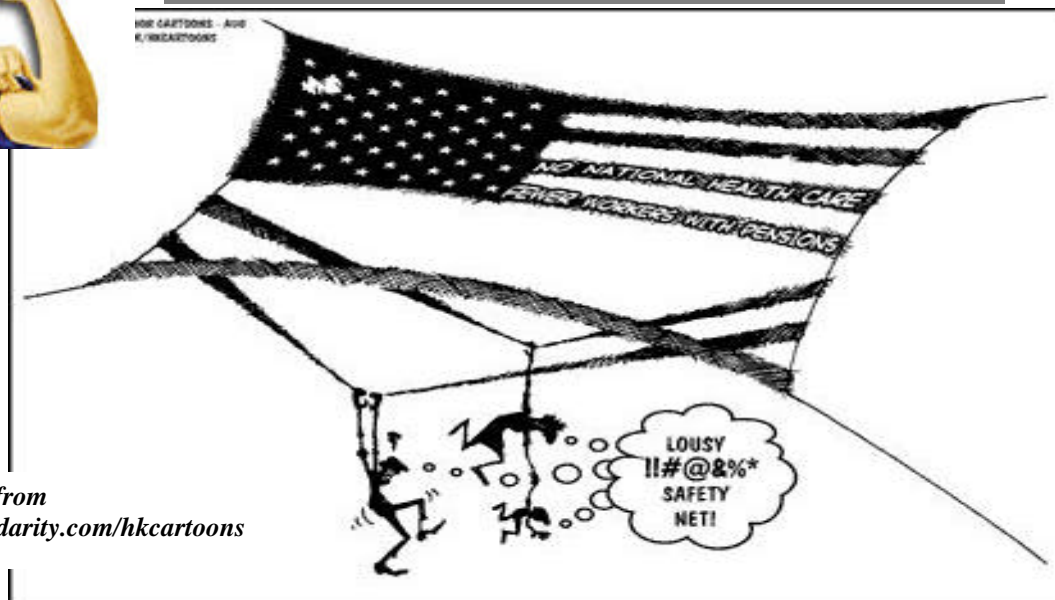
The annual meeting of the IMF/World Bank in Washington DC on September 30 will be greeted by a massive march and rally to say NO to the destructive policies of this undemocratic global institution...

- NO to "Structural Adjustment" policies that require nations to privatize public services and structure their economies for export markets
- NO to the crushing debt under usurious rates that deepen poverty in developing countries
- NO to the wholesale evisceration of labor rights, environmental protections, and community sovereignty from global trade rules and rulers like the FTAA and the WTO...

The Rhode Island Global Action Network is sponsoring buses to Washington leaving at 11 PM on Sept 29 and returning to Providence by 1 AM on Oct. 1.

For information check out <http://www.riglobalaction.org>

*It's your MSWSO...
Get Involved!!*



**ACTION
ALERT!**

**ACTION
ALERT!**



ARISTOCRACY?

“The people who brought us welfare reform on the grounds that getting \$8,000 a year to raise three kids is very bad for a mother’s moral fiber now tell us that Junior, who never worked a day in his life, needs to inherit \$200 million tax-free.” -Molly Ivins, *Syndicated Columnist*

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• **RIC School of Social Work students are actively working to stop the repeal of the Federal Estate Tax.** According to “Responsible Wealth,” a project of United for a Fair Economy (www.ufenet.org):

• “Complete repeal of the estate tax would be bad for our democracy, our economy, and our society. Repealing the estate tax, a constructive part of our tax structure for 85 years, would leave an unfortunate legacy for America’s future generations.

• Only the richest 2 percent of our nation’s families currently pay any estate tax at all. Repealing the estate tax would enrich the heirs of America’s millionaires and billionaires while hurting families who struggle to make ends meet.

• The billions of dollars in state and federal revenues lost will inevitably be made up either by increasing taxes on those less able to pay or by cutting Social Security, Medicare, environmental protection, and many other government programs so important to our nation’s continued well-being.

• The estate tax exerts a powerful and positive effect on charitable giving. Repeal would have a devastating impact on public charities ranging from institutions of higher education and land conservancies to organizations that assist the poor and disadvantaged.

• We recognize the importance of protecting America’s family farms and small businesses, and the estate tax has many special provisions that do so. But this concern — the rationale usually advanced for eliminating the estate tax — can be addressed by amending the existing estate tax system. Let’s fix the estate tax, not repeal it!”

• *A petition is circulating in classrooms. Please take a moment to learn about this issue and join us in our fight!*

• Representatives from the MSWSO will meet with U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee on Monday, April 23 to present our petitions and concerns.

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What Was Life Like Before the Estate Tax?



Think back 100 years to 1901...

Robber Barons controlled vast empires in mining, oil, railroads, and steel. Women couldn't vote. Children worked 14-hour days in filthy sweatshops. Factories belched smoke into the air and dumped raw sewage into rivers. Families crowded together in rat-infested tenements. Farmers struggled for a fair price against big rail and mining interests. Workers labored 80 hours a week for pennies a day. Epidemics swept the nation. Nobody took clean water for granted. There was no Social Security. No Medicare. No minimum wage. No 40 hour work week.

For 85 years, the estate tax has helped us build the United States that we've come to know. The estate tax helped break up the fortunes of the Robber Barons, giving small businesses a chance to compete. Today, the estate tax helps to fund a wide array of government services we all depend on: Enforcement of child labor laws, the minimum wage, and the 40-hour work week. Farm programs that help small farmers keep their land. Education programs like Head Start. Federal health programs like vaccinations and immunizations. Infrastructure programs like water treatment and highways. In these and countless other ways, the estate tax has played a key role in making life better for all Americans.

Not bad for a tax that falls only on the wealthiest 2%!



"The really big fortune, the swollen fortune, by the mere fact of its size acquires qualities which differentiate it in kind as well as in degree from what is possessed by men of relatively small means.

"Therefore I believe in...a graduated inheritance tax on big fortunes, properly safeguarded against evasion and increasing rapidly with the size of the estate."

-Theodore Roosevelt, 1910

Sources and Resources on the estate tax

Defend the Estate Tax: www.DefendtheEstateTax.com
Responsible Wealth: www.responsiblewealth.com

When was the estate tax enacted? The estate tax was enacted in 1916 with broad public approval. Early supporters of estate taxes included Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and Andrew Carnegie.

Why do we need the estate tax? The estate tax raises a significant amount of money from only the wealthiest taxpayers. It encourages charitable giving and promotes America's core economic and democratic values.

What's wrong with repealing the estate tax? The burden of paying for public services will shift to low and middle income taxpayers. States will lose billions in revenue, since many of them get a credit from the estate tax. Giant new loopholes will appear, permitting the very wealthy to avoid capital gains and other taxes they now pay. Overall, repealing the estate tax will further concentrate economic and political power in the hands of the richest 0.1% of American families.

How large must an estate be to be taxed? The net value of the estate must exceed \$675,000 in 2001 for an individual (the exemption will rise to \$1 million by 2006). Couples can exempt \$1.35 million from the estate tax in 2001 (rising to \$2 million by 2006). With planning, businesses can pass on \$5 million tax-free. For farms, the figure is \$8 million.

Who pays the estate tax? The wealthiest 2% of Americans are the only ones who pay estate taxes. Half of all estate taxes are paid by the top one-tenth of one percent of all Americans.

How much does the estate tax raise every year? In 1999, the estate tax raised \$28 billion. Estimates put the figure at \$30 billion for 2000. Nine cabinet departments — including Veterans' Affairs, Labor, Commerce, Agriculture, and Interior — have budgets smaller than \$30 billion.

Is the estate tax a "death tax?" No. 98% of Americans who die pass on their estate completely tax-free. Zero estate tax is charged on money left to a spouse or to charity.

I've heard the estate tax targets family farms and businesses. Not true. Only 3% of all estates taxed have farm or business assets totaling more than half of the estate.

Is the estate tax killing family businesses? No. The small business sector has never been healthier. Family businesses can already take advantage of special estate tax breaks that are designed to allow businesses to continue operating.

But doesn't the estate tax force some businesses to close? Rarely. Family businesses are sold or closed for a variety of reasons, and the estate tax would rank near the bottom of the list. Often, other family members are not interested in running the business any longer. In any case, the estate tax can be modified to protect small businesses without repealing it entirely.

Does the estate tax encourage charitable giving? Yes. A study by the Treasury Department found that eliminating the estate tax would reduce charitable bequests by 12% per year.

Is the estate tax "double taxation?" Not on the portion of estates that have risen in value over the years, such as the appreciated value of a stock portfolio. These capital gains, which make up the vast bulk of the value of the largest estates, have never been taxed.

I worked hard for my money. The estate tax just isn't fair. The vast majority of Americans work hard, save what