

“The Pathfinders for the Difference Makers”

A Post-Review Commentary on The Difference Makers
by William C. Frederick, July 2008

There is an amusing photograph of the University of Pittsburgh’s 42-story Cathedral of Learning building taken during its construction in the 1920s-30s. The first 5 or 6 floors are unfinished, consisting only of the open steel inner framework, while the soaring upper floors have already acquired their *faux* Gothic sheathing of limestone blocks. The distinct and rather disturbing impression is that the very foundations on which the entire structure rests is missing. Let that photograph serve as the guiding metaphor of this additional commentary on Sandra Waddock’s book, *The Difference Makers*, as reviewed earlier.

Without wishing in any way to diminish or detract from the undoubted and incomparable achievements of the Difference Makers, I do wish to offer an addendum—or perhaps it is a prelude—to their significant accomplishments. Consider the following (and quite incomplete) list of organizations active in the corporate social responsibility field since 1940, most of them based in the United States.

Early CSR Civil Society Organizations and Founding Dates

- **CONGRESS ON RACIAL EQUALITY.** Founded **1942.** James Farmer. African-American civil rights.
- **CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION IN EUROPE.** Founded **1945.** Renamed **CHRISTIAN AID** in **1964.** Poverty and other social problems.
- **INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION** and **WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.** Focus on worker safety and health protections since **1950.**
- **CATALYST.** Founded **1952.** Felice N. Schwartz. Women’s workplace rights.
- **SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE.** Founded **1957.** Martin Luther King, Jr. African-American civil rights.
- **STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE.** Founded **1960.** Ella Baker, Marion Barry. African-American civil rights.
- **WORLD WILDLIFE FUND.** Founded **early 1960s.** Ecology, wildlife.
- **NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN.** Founded **1966.** Betty Friedan. Women’s civil rights and workplace opportunities.
- **FRIENDS OF THE EARTH.** Founded **1969 (USA), 1971 (International).** Environmental protection.
- **NATIONAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL.** Founded **1970.** Environmental protection.
- **GREEN PEACE.** Founded **1971 (USA), 1979 (International).** Environmental protection; other social issues.
- **PUBLIC CITIZEN** and **PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUPS.** Founded **1971.** Ralph Nader. Consumer protection, environmental protection.

They began work in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. Each brought activist pressure to bear on corporations. Their agendas embraced social and ethical issues arising from

business operations. Concrete proposals involving specific goals—hiring quotas, job opportunities, safety and health standards, environmental protection plans, poverty relief and recovery programs, civil rights laws for women and minorities, consumer protections—were put in motion. Now called NGOs, they collectively became the voice of what is now known as civil society. They demanded more social awareness, social responsibility, and social accountability from business firms. (Sound familiar?) *They were not charitable organizations, nor philanthropic offshoots of corporate largesse.* For the most part, they were grassroots organizations, supported widely by a concerned citizenry.

Now go one step further and look at the following list of people generally considered the leaders of the CSR movement in the United States from the 1940s to the present. Others could be named as well.

Other Early CSR and Civil Society Architects (1940s-80s)

- **Howard Bowen. 1940s-70s.** *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (1953).
- **Ralph Nader. 1950s to present.** *Unsafe At Any Speed* (1965). Campaign GM. Public Interest Research Groups. Public Citizen. Wide range of consumer protection activism. CSR books.
- **Clarence Walton. 1950s-90s.** *Conceptual Foundations of Business* (1961).
- **Keith Davis. 1950s-80s.** *Business and Its Environment* (1966). SIM leadership.
- **William Frederick. 1950s to present.** Social audit. CSR books, articles. SIM leadership.
- **Joseph McGuire. 1950s-80s.** *Business and Society* (1960). SIM leadership.
- **Sumner Marcus. 1950s-70s.** Co-founder, Social Issues in Management (SIM) division, Academy of Management.
- **Dow Votaw, Earl Cheit, Edwin Epstein. 1960s onward.** CSR books, articles, conferences, workshops.
- **S. Prakash Sethi. 1960s to present.** Sullivan Principles, South Africa. Nestle Infant Formula controversy. CSR books, articles, global field work.
- **Raymond Baumhart and Theodore Purcell. 1960s-70s.** *HBR* CSR articles, field research.
- **George Steiner. 1960s-80s.** SIM leadership. CSR books, articles, workshops.
- **Kirk Hanson. 1970s to present.** National Affiliation of Concerned Business Students. Business Enterprise Trust. Director, Markkula Center for Business Ethics, Santa Clara University.
- **Raymond H. Bauer. 1972.** Conceived, introduced the corporate social audit.
- **Neil Jacoby.** *Corporate Power and Social Responsibility* (1973).
- **Neil Chamberlain.** *The Limits of Corporate Social Responsibility* (1973).
- **Lee E. Preston. 1970s-2000s.** *Private Management and Public Policy* (1975). *Research in Corporate Social Performance and Policy* (1978) series. SIM leadership.
- **Christopher Stone.** *Where the Law Ends: The Social Control of Corporate Behavior* (1975).
- **Gerald Cavanagh. 1970s to present.** *American Business Values* (1976). SIM leadership. Conferences, workshops.

- **Archie Carroll. 1970s to present.** CSR textbooks, articles. SIM leadership.
- **David Vogel. 1970s to present.** *Lobbying the Corporation: Citizen Challenges to Business Authority* (1978). CSR books, articles. Editor, *California Management Review*.
- **R. Edward Freeman. 1980s to present.** Introduced corporate stakeholder concept: *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (1984). CSR books, articles. Ruffin Lecture series. ***Freeman’s stakeholder concept became and remains the central steel beam supporting the entire CSR infrastructure subsequently erected by the Difference Makers.***

The list speaks for itself. Collectively, they built the conceptual and theoretical framework defining and justifying the central theme of corporate social responsibility. They created *operational structures* on which business policy and strategy could be based—social audits; accountability systems; stakeholder linkages; principled compacts and partnerships between governments, community groups, and business firms; ethics centers and spinoff corporate counterparts; fieldwork experiments in cooperation with corporations—and laid the organizational foundations on which future global codes of conduct, accountability, responsibility, and transparency would be erected. ***These were the Pathfinders for the Difference Makers***, whose subsequent accomplishments were thus made possible.

Working alongside these CSR Pathfinders from the 1970s forward was yet another group—business ethics philosophers—whose analytic tools and moral concepts were forged from the wisdom of both ancient and modern philosophers.

Early Business Ethics architects

- **Richard DeGeorge.** Co-founder, Society for Business Ethics (SBE). BE books.
- **Tom Beauchamp.** Co-founder, SBE. BE textbooks.
- **Norman Bowie.** Co-founder, SBE. BE textbooks. Kantian (human) rights: a key philosophic foundation stone.
- **Kenneth Goodpaster.** BE concepts, books, workshops. SBE leadership.
- **Michael Hoffman.** Co-founder, SBE. Founder, Bentley Center for Business Ethics. BE conferences. Host founder: Ethics Officer Association.
- **Thomas Donaldson.** Co-founder, SBE. Integrated Social Contracts Theory (with **Thomas Dunfee**). Rawlsian social justice: a key philosophic foundation stone.
- **Patricia Werhane.** Founding editor, *Business Ethics Quarterly*. BE books.
- **Robert Solomon.** BE books. Aristotelian virtues: a key philosophic foundation stone.

By now, you get my drift: “Corporate responsibility” did not begin in the 1990s. Nor was it a simple doctrine of “doing good” or “evaluating philanthropic efforts”. Call it what you will—*corporate responsibility, corporate citizenship, corporate social performance, corporate social responsibility, corporate social responsiveness, social issues management, public affairs management, strategic corporate philanthropy, community partnerships, stakeholder engagement*—the core ideas and the implementing

structure emerged from the decades-long collective efforts of the Pathfinders and their many companions.

In the end—and at the beginning—they filled in those unfinished lower floors of Pitt’s metaphorical Cathedral of Learning that enabled the final structure to rise to unprecedented heights of business-and-society consciousness. The view from the top, as revealed in *The Difference Makers*, is inspiring. To the present day, there remain a few unoccupied, unfinished floors at the very top of the Cathedral of Learning—still more space to be filled in by tomorrow’s business-and-society architects.