

Communications

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

On September 2 at approximately 4:45 p.m., the Business Meeting of the APSA voted to commit suicide. By vote of 102 to 60 the Meeting adopted a Council resolution to amend our constitution with a provision that effectively eliminates the power of the Business Meeting to adopt any resolutions at all. The Business Meeting under this change would be given two powers: (1) to adopt Council resolutions and (2) to refer a resolution to the entire membership by mail ballot if by positive vote of more than one-third of those present. As one colleague observed, it can now be a rubber stamp or a postage stamp.

I do not now, nor did I at the Business Meeting, rise to defend the Business Meeting as such. My purpose was then, and is now, to balance the books so that members approach the referendum with a sense of the debate they cannot now get because of their dispersion throughout the country. I'll try to reproduce the debate by giving the Council's point and at least one counterpoint.

(1) Council: The Business Meeting is unrepresentative. Counterpoint: But so is the Council unrepresentative. One proponent actually tried to argue that the Council is representative because it is elected! That is an example of argument from tactic rather than principle.

Discussion: In my opinion, there is no need whatsoever for the Council or the Business Meeting to be representative. Our Annual Meetings are for the active scholars, to gain professional experience, to gain recognition for their contributions, and to gain honors for academic achievements. The Council and the Business Meeting can, without apology, be left to the most active and committed members. But if the proponents of the Amendment want to apply the principle of representation, it seems to me they ought to apply it properly and consistently. And if applied to the Business Meeting, why do so by trying to abolish it? One alternative could be a House of Delegates—not a new proposal but one that is timely and reasonable in light of the proposition before us.

(2) Council: The Business Meeting is subject to takeover by crazed majorities, reacting to a hot issue, or stacked with the wrong people in the wrong town at the right time. Counterpoint: This is quite possible. However, (1) the present provision for a two-thirds vote to adopt resolutions from the floor seems to be a pretty fair

safeguard. And in any case, (b) there just haven't been any such instances in the past decade.

Discussion: The present motion is in large part inspired by last year's vote to uphold the 1976 resolution to stay out of states where ERA had not been ratified—and therefore, stay out of Chicago in 1979. However, a very solid proportion of those 1978 votes were provided by people who had the impression that the Council was trying to finesse the issue and was not meeting it head on. I was one of those. For example, in 1976, or any time before that, a very good case could have been made for the Wahlke ruling (that motions like the ERA motion were beyond the range of positions we were constitutionally permitted to adopt). But not in 1978, when we had already adopted the ERA resolution and were then going to have to honor it. The 1978 action proved only that the Council can make mistakes. It did not prove that the Business Meeting could easily be taken over by crazed, temporary movements.

(3) Council: The Business Meeting is undemocratic; it discriminates against the 98 percent whose economic hardship or school conflicts prevent them from attending. Counterpoint: True. And it was also true 20 years ago.

Discussion: (a) Why try to correct this by virtual abolition of the one opportunity that the *most active* members have to express themselves? (b) We do not necessarily protect the interests of the mass of members by showering them with 13 (or more) propositions each year. Referenda ought to be limited to basic constitutional issues. (c) There is no way to prevent the mass membership from adopting inconsistent and contradictory propositions.

Finally, one general observation. Years ago I resigned in bitterness from the Caucus for New Political Science because, among other things, its organization goals were so strongly embraced that Caucus leaders were willing to engage in political strategies regardless of constitutional and procedural niceties; these were considered *formalities that merely served established interests*. Now it is the established interests, at least present and former Council members, who are engaging in the same *realpolitik*—albeit with more subtlety. Leave aside the fact that the Business Meeting this year had been stacked with members who almost never attend a Business Meeting. What is worse is that the proponents were willing to distort sound constitutional principles in order to reach their goal of preventing any future Business Meeting from being stacked. While listening to their arguments I felt somewhat like Justice Jackson in his *Korematsu* dissent: When you flank or

rewrite formalities to serve a specific goal, you are likely to do permanent injustice to both.

A learned society ought to remind itself continually of its reasons for being. A learned society of political scientists ought to have the additional obligation to provide the best possible example of political propriety in the conduct of its affairs. Just as our various caucuses must be calmed with reminders of these obligations, so, occasionally, must the Council. Most members of the APSA tend to give Council positions the benefit of the doubt. I do; my record of Council support is long and explicit. But not this time. We ought to defeat this proposition and then go on to reform properly our structure and rules, in ways more adequately designed to serve our obligations.

Theodore Lowi
Cornell University

To the Editor:

I supported the constitutional amendment authored by Professor Austin Ranney and others which provides that the membership of the Association should be polled on major issues raised at the business meeting of the Association. The amendment will be submitted to the membership this fall. It seemed (and seems) obvious to me that this is the most just way to deal with issues before the Association at this time.

During discussion of the amendment at the last business meeting several arguments were raised by opponents of the proposed amendment. It was suggested that: (1) Issues should not merely be voted on by mail ballot. They should be discussed, for discussion is an integral part of the democratic process. (2) Despite the fact that the business meeting is notoriously unrepresentative of the membership as a whole, as compared to a mail ballot, one need not fear that unconstitutional actions will be taken, because the constitution limits what the business meeting can accomplish. (3) If members are required to vote on a large number of issues, the Association will become unwieldy, and will be unable to conduct its business.

Let me deal with the issues involved in reverse order. First, there is no reason to suppose that mail ballots will unduly burden the Association. Many of our sister professional associations have relied on mail ballots for a long time. They seem no more disorganized than are we.

Second, I doubt that constitutional provisions will effectively provide safeguards against relatively small groups of members who wish to press causes of their own. Frankly, I supported the proposed amendment because last year, at a business meeting I could not attend, some 350 individuals succeeded in obtaining the approval of a resolution which prohibited the Association from holding this year's meeting in Chicago. They did so because Illinois has failed to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. Our constitution specifically prohibits the Association from taking stands on issues other than those

which directly impinge upon academic freedom. Those supporting the resolution maintained that ERA was an issue of academic freedom, since women, today, are prevented from participating fully in societal decisions. The argument astonished and angered me. Using the same logic the business meeting could commit the Association to a position on most if not all major pieces of legislation before the Congress. If the Association wishes to change its character from that of a professional group which as a group does not take a stand on public issues, so be it. However, such decisions should be made by the whole membership and not by a group which is affluent enough and/or passionate enough to pack meetings on crucial votes. Neither affluence nor passion are necessarily correlated to a high degree with justice or virtue.

Third, it is certainly true that democracy implies discussion, and it is unfortunate that we are too large and too dispersed to engage in full and continuous discussion of issues. It is for this reason that we have a Council elected by the membership which does just this. Professor Theodore Lowi, at the Business Meeting, suggested that we should reject the proposed resolution and create some sort of house of deputies. (Those may not have been his exact words, but the thought was clear.) What is the Council but that? We might consider enlarging it somewhat if we wish, though increased size might, in fact, make it too cumbersome, given the difficulties and expense of getting people together. His argument seems to me no reason not to act now to place authority in the hands in which it belongs, i.e., in the elected Council and the whole membership.

To suggest that a highly unrepresentative business meeting, which gathers together for two or three hours once a year, is superior in legitimacy to an elected Council or the whole membership, seems to me the height of hypocrisy. Those who argued thusly are well aware that the business meeting can be easily packed by the well heeled and the passionate. They are well aware, too, that most people who come to such meetings are not likely to be enlightened (or to have their minds changed) by the very brief discussions which time permits. A meeting of 200-500 people once a year for two hours may provide a wonderful opportunity for rhetoric. It does not provide a setting for attempting to work through issues.

I suspect that when the Association was founded, and for some time afterward, the business meeting was representative, because the Association was quite small. For many years after that the incongruity of allowing an unrepresentative business meeting the opportunity to over-rule an elected Council was ignored, because business meetings were staid affairs. There was little or no controversy.

For better or worse the Association is now rather more fragmented. Under such circumstances our only resource is to vest authority in the membership as a whole and/or elected bodies. The business meeting can still provide a forum for the more passionate among us. (I

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include myself among the relatively passionate on some issues.) It will still have the power under the proposed amendment to submit to the whole membership measures which the Council has ignored or, to their minds, has decided incorrectly. I would not wish to have that authority taken from the business meeting but that is all the authority to which it is legitimately entitled.

Stanley Rothman
Smith College

To the Editor:

As a member of a department which got a relatively high "productivity" rating from John Robey, I feel I can react to his article without being accused of sour grapes. *PS* rendered a sharp disservice to the profession by publishing this piece. Many of us have tried for years to overcome the idea that scholars' writings need only to be counted, not read, in order for one to evaluate them. This article elevates that unthinking standard to the level of an "objective measure," which by strong implication is superior to the judgments of our peers.

While one must recognize the many shortcomings of reputational evaluations, they are at least the varied unsystematic errors which will occur in any ambiguous choice; there are lags in recognizing changes in departments, regrettable "halo effects" come into play, and so on. But Robey's study systematically isolates a single source of error and raises it to the level of an objective standard. The effect is pernicious.

It was bad enough to be quietly embarrassed at seeing an article like this in a journal of our national association. Since parts of it were picked up by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, however, we have had to endure the puzzled questions of colleagues from other fields who want to know what is going on in political science. What are we to tell them?

W. Phillip Shively
University of Minnesota

To the Editor:

Ross Baker's commentary/review titled "Keefe Smiling!" in the Summer 1979 issue of *PS* was undoubtedly one of the more valuable contributions to the discipline to appear in some time. However, I was disappointed to note that in referring to legendary thin volumes—such works as *The Social Responsibility of Chemical Corporations* or *Foreign Travel on an Economy Budget for U.S. Congressmen*, Professor Baker made no mention of the extremely thin volume, *The Political Scientists' Songbook of Fellowship and Good Will*.

Robert N. Kearney
Syracuse University

To the Editor:

We would like to offer critiques and potential

solutions to two problems that we seem to encounter in attending the Association's annual convention:

- (1) **Timing:** As more and more colleagues move toward beginning the academic year in late August, it would seem to make more sense to move the meeting time of the convention to an earlier date. The late date for the convention proves especially difficult for those of us who teach at small colleges where attendance by faculty for orientation and student advising are mandatory. Therefore, the Association should consider changing the convention to mid-August so that the opportunity to attend the *full* convention proceedings would be greater.
- (2) **Political Science at the Small College:** While it is important for all of us to be attuned to the latest research in the field, it is also important to pay attention to the unique problems of teaching political science at the small college with a small (one, two, or three person) department. Therefore, we would like to suggest that the Association incorporate into the convention program on a trial basis a panel dealing with this issue. Discussion could center around such topics as the structure of a basic political science curriculum, the role and identity of political science in the context of a small college, student research without access to major libraries, etc. This would be a logical extension of efforts already begun via the *NEWS*, NSF-Chautauqua programs, NEH summer stipends, etc.

We trust that these suggestions will receive prompt and thoughtful consideration. Others who feel strongly about these issues ought to contact the writers.

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To the Editor:

How are women faring at our national meeting in this the 75th anniversary of the Association and the 10th of both the APSA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession and the Women's Caucus? Following is my annual stocktaking.

Though official program female paper givers are down sharply, the presence of women among the section heads, chairpersons, and discussants is up.

As usual when women were section heads, other women had a better chance to head panels (28.1 percent), give papers (16.2 percent), and serve as discussants (29.4 percent). Likewise, female chairpersons resulted in greater likelihood of women emerging as paper givers (26.5 percent) and discussants (30.0 percent).

	Section Heads			Chairpersons			Paper Givers			Discussants		
	T	W	%	T	W	%	T	W	%	T	W	%
1979	16	4	25.0	128	23	18.0	525	77	14.7	184	35	19.0
1978	16	2	2.5	131	20	15.3	500	99	19.8	210	35	16.7
1977	15	3	20.0	129	20	15.5	531	89	16.8	204	30	14.7
1976	18	4	22.2	126	24	19.0	577	65	13.6	170	31	18.2

On the other hand, two sections headed by males had excellent records with respect to selecting female performers. The section on Political Thought and Philosophy had women as 40 percent of chairpersons and 26.6 percent discussants (though only 12 percent paper givers) and the section on Urban Government and Politics had 42.9 percent female chairpersons and 26.8 percent female paper givers (though none of its 11 discussants were women). The worst showing came in the section on Analytical Theory and Methodology: not a single female chairperson or discussant and only one out of 26 paper givers (3.8 percent).

The program had its usual stag panels such as Trade Union Responses to the Contemporary Economic Problems in Western Europe (a male chair and discussant, eight male paper givers), Roundtable on Theory and Measurement in CPS Election Surveys (a male chair, seven male paper givers), and Distributing Political Benefits: Federal, State, and Urban Findings (two male chairs, six male paper givers, a male discussant), and an occasional predominately female panel such as Toward a Redefinition of Power: Is There a Feminist Contribution? (a female chair, two female paper givers and two female discussants), and Feminism and Political Participation (chaired by a woman, with all three paper givers being women, though only one female among three discussants). (Lest the reader conclude that women were conspicuous only when the subject matter was feminist: the panel on Experimental Means, Modes, Methods: A Teaching Workshop was headed by a woman and had women as four of its seven paper givers.)

There are, of course, other measures of successful participation in the life of the Association. Here, too, women are coming of age. They were conspicuous in the deliberations of the Business Meeting. We're a record number of women running for Association office. About 40 percent of those appointed in 1979 to committees of the Association were female.

Martin Gruberg
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

To the Editor:

Political scientists, who were once charged by Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. with making mistakes in writing about the Supreme Court, will be interested in his version of the Court's action in the 18-year-old voting case, as expressed in a recent colloquy with Professor Harry Clor at Kenyon College. Justice Powell asserted:

It . . . was the Supreme Court that made the difficult decision, one the Congress apparently did not want to make, to lower the voting age to 18. There was nothing in the Constitution that could have suggested that result. In the simplest terms, the Court decided that when young people were being drafted and asked to go to war and risk their lives at age 18, the time had come to extend to them the right to participate as citizens in the decisions that affected them so seriously. (Kenyon College Alumni Bulletin, Summer, 1979, p. 15.)

After this comment in the interview Clor quickly changed the subject.

C. Herman Pritchett
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