

# Introduction

HAROLD D. LASSWELL  
*Yale University Law School*

The distinguished colleague who delivers the presidential address this afternoon stands between most of us, his colleagues in political science, and the American electorate. He stands between us in a very different sense from an Iron Curtain that shuts off contact, or a campaign speaker who cuts off understanding. Jim Burns is an interpreter. He tells our fellow citizens what they want to know about American government and politics. So he picks up whatever he or any of us has been able to find out and puts it together in clear and interesting prose. He separates the wheat from the chaff and refrains from publishing the chaff.

From time to time people want to know about the constitution and the court and the legal system. Jim Burns and Jack Peltason put it together in a book that is well-enough received to keep deserving intellectuals well above the poverty line. At times people want to know about the ins and outs of American government and the party system. Jim has obliged. They want to see how it works and is worked by recent leaders. Jim has obliged.

The Burns technique has been to add field

experience and observation to the ordinary diligence of scholarship. He explored at first hand the lives of individuals and institutions at war in World War II. He may or may not have met a payroll; most certainly Jim has faced an electorate. Besides earning the respect of professional political scientists he has won the confidence of professional pols and top-flight leaders. A frequent traveler, he has moved from country to country and confirmed the rumor that if Williamstown is not the peak of contemporary civilization it at least knows where the peaks are.

No matter how schematic may be the formal designs on which we draw in quest of new knowledge, no matter how sophisticated the data-gathering and -processing routines, a continuing test is contribution to what our fellow citizens want to know about American values, institutions, and leaders. President Burns has for years been an indispensable interpreter of professional curiosity and effort to the curiosity and needs of the responsible citizen.

Mr. President, we admire what you have done, and anticipate what you will do.