

## Transformational Politics Group Applies to Become Organized Section in Fall, 1990

Jeff Fishel, *American University*  
Betty H. Zisk, *Boston University*

A few years ago, a small group of political scientists met at the APSA Meetings and formed a new network of scholar-teachers in the discipline called the Conference Group on Transformational Politics (CGTP). Over the past three years, interest in the CGTP's panels and support groups has grown substantially, and a sufficient number of petitions have been signed to allow it to seek Council approval for Organized Section status.

The primary aim of the proposed new Section is to reopen and re-explore some fundamental questions about emergent possibilities in the global political order, and in the relationship of political science and political scientists to that order. As we move toward the 21st century, many scholars and practitioners are questioning the validity and viability of traditional approaches and divisions in political science and political life (normative/empirical; personal/professional; theory/practice; Liberal/Conservative; Left/Right; global/local; secular/spiritual, to identify a few). How useful and meaningful are such divisions, such polarities in the 1990s? Or later, if and when a "post-liberal" politics truly emerges in the next 50 years? Scholars in this section are committed to *examining alternatives that seek a new synthesis*.

All of the original group are veterans—intellectually and/or politically—of one or more of the most important, progressive social movements of the past 35 years: feminist, civil rights, environmental, peace and nonviolent conflict-resolution, human and spiritual growth, gay and lesbian rights, libertarian, populist-democratic. Some have long histories in "left-liberal" circles, others in "conservative-humanist." Most, however, are dissatisfied with the conceptual assumptions of the classic "Left-Right" continuum, not only because of its obvious deficiencies, noted by political scientists for generations,

but also because dimensions of this type are rooted in a limited political consciousness at a time when a more robust and historically appropriate new approach is long overdue.

Our members do *not* agree on the specific forms that such a comprehensive alternative might take (see some principles, however, detailed below). Rather, we are united in our commitment to searching and experimenting in a manner that reaches beyond the traditional discourse of contemporary political science or political life. In this search, we share aspects of a vision about human beings that one associates in modern life with Carl Rogers: that we are capable of *becoming* more life-affirming, responsible, compassionate and caring, in our professional as well as political lives.

How might such values become manifest in politics? In our research? In our teaching? In our behavior and functioning in the American Political Science Association?

The proposed Organized Section on Transformational Politics will explore these questions, on a large scale, and in the very mundane but important ways we function as political scientists, however and wherever that might be. For example, the CGTP has organized a "support group" that meets nightly at the APSA Meetings to examine whatever political/professional/personal issues participants choose. It has explored ways of keeping APSA panels intellectually alive and stimulating without reinforcing the often hyper-competitive and personally destructive behavior that characterizes much of scholarly exchange. And members have presented research in areas such as the search for a new political paradigm: Green politics; the potential role of humanistic psychology in public affairs; the contributions of eco-feminism to feminist theory in particular, social change in general; post-structural/post-modern political theory; and spiritual foundations of political transformation.

The proposed new section hopes to continue promoting a political science and a political community consistent with the following ethical imperatives (individuals in the section do not share every aspect of these principles but they are illustrative):

(1) *A politics of participation* that provides every member of society with full opportunities to influence the political, social and economic institutions affecting their lives, and that fosters collective *and* personal responsibility to fulfill that task;

(2) *A politics of social justice and hope* that seeks to reduce the material inequities within and between nations, and that treats the problems and scarcities before us, now and in the future, as opportunities to clarify our sense of what truly is important in life;

(3) *A politics of conflict-resolution and healing* that acknowledges and respects differences *and* goes beyond "us against them," or "right versus wrong," in promoting cooperation and community in all matters where possible;

(4) *A politics of human growth* that fosters the full development of each person's potential;

(5) *A politics of ecology and unitive consciousness* which understands that we are only one part of a seamless web of life, that we are responsible to *all* life on earth, and that our journey can have sacred meaning—as we comprehend that term.

We hope others will join us, and we welcome new members. For additional information, contact one of the following: Jeff Fishel, School of Public Affairs, American University, Washington, DC 20016, (202) 885-6225; or Betty H. Zisk, Department of Political Science, Boston University, 232 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215, (617) 273-0923.

## Finding Jobs: Placement of Political Scientists, 1988

Sheilah Mann, *American Political Science Association*

One hundred and fifteen Ph.D. departments (92%) responded to a survey on the 1988 placement class. Ninety-seven of these departments awarding Ph.D.s in political science reported having candidates in the 1988 placement class. Their responses account for 78% of the Ph.D.