

Communications

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

If I were a less temperamental soul than I am, which I'm decidedly not, I would be writing you to say how "saddened" I am on inspecting the preliminary program of the 1976 annual meeting of this beloved Association. But being what I am, I can only say that I am appalled.

Let me start at home. I see myself listed on page 151 as having "A Dialogue with Harold Lasswell" under the auspices of something called "1976 Alternate Program Committee." Now, somebody may have asked me to converse with HDL, but somebody didn't tell me that the dialogue would not be part of what is now oddly called the "Regular Sequence" of panels. This outrage is compounded by the fact that when consulted on the matter of an "Alternate Program," I vigorously advised against the idea. Alas, as I have conversed with HDL for all these years, the least that one might expect is to have the projected dialogue listed under what is so drolly called the "Bicentennial Sequence." Surely, HDL is the only one I can think of among contemporaries who might have made it in 1776. Anyway, I'll be in England while you whoop it up on the occasion of the nation's birthyear in Daleytown, U.S.A. And I won't be sending you any postcard saying "wish I were there."

Frankly, the program has gone completely berserk and out of hand. Not only do the Caucusites monopolize the Bicentennial Sequence, so-called, but they also have their own "Caucus for a New Political Science" panels. And for the Regulars there are not only regular panels but, if they are unhappy with regularity, those alternate panels where you can meet some deviants. If you are still unhappy, there are the panels of the "Foundations of Political Theory Group" whoever in hell they are; or the panels of the "Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society" or the "Women's Caucus for Political Science." Depending on what side you are on, you can attend either a panel of the "National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice" or the Russell Sage sponsored panel on "Civil Liberties and Social Control." If you are not an ideological warrior, and if you want to make peace, there is some panel of "Political Scientists Interested in Diplomacy" (I am!). Walt Disney couldn't have done better in designing a program.

Then there is the new balkanization of the comparative, so-called, field-study groups or conferences galore: Asian, British, Caribbean, French, German, Italian, and Japanese (will

they forgive me for not *naming* them?). And who, I wonder, had the guilty conscience but brilliant idea of putting it all together again in a set of panels offered by "Joint Country Groups." The fellow—he/she—is surely a genius.

There are many other program goodies that make my mouth water and almost leave me speechless—except that speaking out is what this letter is about. I have always longed for a short course on the paradoxes of politics in which, during a short day, an author has the opportunity to advertise his book. And if I were to be in Chicago, I would certainly take the short-short course called "Workshop on Effective Teaching" that will take only a couple of hours or so, not cost a thing and really let me have it.

Needless to say, I am delighted to discover some sanity in this mad program. For one thing, the old-fashioned university departments seem to cherish the sober idea of holding dutch-treat cocktail parties; as does the "Conference for the Study of Political Thought." Of course, if drink alone is not enough, you can mix it with "current developments" in a group called "Comparative Urban Research." The really mad ones meet at breakfast, like the "Committee on Health Politics" and the "Law and Society Association." Spoilers like the "Policy Studies Organization" will cut into your lunchtime: but let's do anything to make our discipline policy-relevant!

You get the point? Some smart prophet once called it "The New Revolution in Political Science."

Heinz Eulau
Stanford University

To the Editor:

In discussions with a number of my colleagues, I have discovered that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction among APSA members regarding the content and format of the *Review*. The major complaints seem to concern the following two points: 1) the tremendous backlog of articles accepted for publication but not yet in print (the December 1975 issue of the *APSR* listed 62 such articles), and 2) the amount of space devoted to reviews of books which have been published years before the reviews appeared in the *Review*.

The import of the first complaint is obvious. The seriousness of the second complaint is illustrated by looking at the five most recent issues of the *APSR*. A total of 542 pages were

devoted to book reviews, which is 33% of the total number of pages in these issues devoted to academic concerns. Furthermore, of the 522 books reviewed in the *APSR*, 265 (or 51%) books had publication dates of more than two calendar years before the review was published.

It is interesting to compare the *APSR*'s treatment of book reviews with that of some other academic journals. Most of the other journals devoted far fewer pages to book reviews (e.g., *Annals*—24%; *Journal of Politics*—19%; *Western Political Quarterly*—16%). Of greater importance is the fact that these journals were much more likely to review only the most current books—it is a rare occasion for a book to be reviewed more than two years after publication.

In light of these facts and the complaints they have generated, I would like to offer the following suggestions:

1) Fewer pages should be devoted to book reviews—between 15% and 20% should be more than adequate. If the figure of 20% had been used instead of the present 33% figure, a total of 214 pages in the five most recent *APSR*

issues could have been devoted to the publication of about 20 additional articles—thus, greatly reducing the backlog.

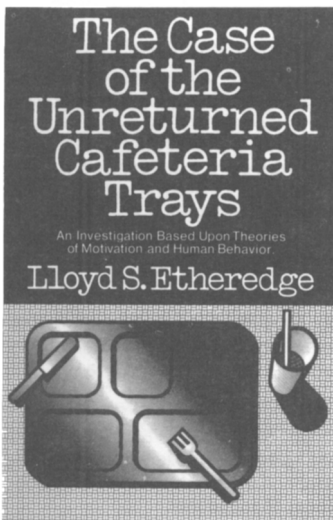
2) Book reviews should be limited to 700 to 900 words. This will allow about the same number of book reviews to be published within a smaller number of pages.

3) Books should be reviewed within two calendar years of their publication dates.

It is my belief that these few suggestions will greatly improve the *APSR* by allowing a much faster dissemination of recent research through the publication of more articles and reviews of more current books.

I hope that this short note will encourage other APSA members to submit additional suggestions for improving the *Review* and will lead to a serious discussion of these matters at future meetings of the Executive Council and among the membership at-large.

Wesley D. Clark, Jr.
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