

Letters to the Editor

Top Scholars

To the Editor:

In the Spring 1982 issue of *PS* John S. Robey offered a new answer to the old question, "Who are the top scholars in political science?" Suggesting that a count of citations in a well known index might provide a better indicator of pre-eminence than reputational surveys, he duly inventoried references, and presented a new set of individual rankings.

The familiar litany of reasons why such listings should be treated with the utmost skepticism scarcely bears repeating in a brief letter to the editor. Suffice it to say that I, at least, am persuaded that such efforts endanger the good name of behavioral social science, and are best left to APSA cocktail parties.

In fairness to many individuals omitted from Dr. Robey's list, however, I think a defect in his methodology should be clearly pointed out. In preparing the rankings, Dr. Robey counted citations only for a few dozen scholars. These, he explains, he chose on the basis of their reputation, service to the APSA, and appearance in earlier studies.

As a consequence, his results depend entirely upon the relatively small number of people he checked. A different list would almost certainly produce another set of "top scholars."

One example may stand for many others to make the point clear. For some reason—perhaps simply a question of age cohorts—my senior colleague here at MIT, Walter Dean Burnham, happened not to be in the sample Dr. Robey counted. But a glance at his source, the *Social Science Citation Index*, shows a very large number of citations to Burnham's work—enough to place him well up among the rankings Dr. Robey proposes.

Other cases of this sort doubtless exist. I do not think anyone should count on this or similar lists.

Thomas Ferguson
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Soviet Scholars

To the Editor:

I was pleased to see Professor Adelman's interesting demographic survey of Soviet specialists in our profession (*PS*, Winter 1983). His findings, while they do not contradict those which I reported for the profession as a whole (*PS*, Winter 1982), provided a welcome new perspective. A few aspects of Professor Adelman's report especially intrigued me:

First, whereas I found those 65 years old or older to make up about 2% of still active members of the professoriate, the figures gathered by Professor Adelman show some 5% of Andropov-watchers in that category. What can explain this difference in sexagenarian sprightliness (or tenure-keeping tenacity)? Their proclivity to arrive in the profession from Europe and the frostbelt states is a tantalizing, but probably unreliable, clue.

Second, now that his survey has shown that there is some sort of geriatric bulge in the field of Soviet politics, it would be helpful to discover which areas of our profession are, on the other hand, more youthful and thus discouraging to ambitious new entrants. (My money is on methodologists and public policy analysts.)

Lastly, as we discover different age distributions within various sub-fields of political science, we probably will be in a better position to anticipate, and advise on, retirement-created vacancies. Yet

Letters

will we also unwittingly encourage among those newly seeking to enter our professoriate some ghoulish, and not just intellectual, motives?

John C. Lane
SUNY/Buffalo

Independent Scholars

To the Editor:

In your last issue, Richard Bissell, on behalf of U.S.I.A., invited political scientists to participate in U.S.I.A.'s program for scheduling American scholars for talks overseas.

Neither I nor a number of colleagues with whom I have spoken about the program are any longer willing, under the new Reagan rules for the program, to participate in it, although we did so under the old rules. The new rules put participants under a cloud. Are they independent scholars? Or are they hired guns? Neither under the old or the new rules does U.S.I.A. tell a scholar what he must or must not say. But under the new rules, candidates for the program are subjected to a political clearance with the intention that those political scientists who are cleared to speak abroad will be those who will probably explain and defend and not substantially criticize Reagan policies.

Many professionals in the administration of the program are embarrassed by it. For a not wholly candid but revealing characterization of the new rules, see a letter to the *New York Times*, March 9, 1982, from the Director of the agency, Charles Z. Wick, appointed by President Reagan; Wick ought to be embarrassed by his new rules.

Charles E. Lindblom
Yale University

Gypsy Scholars

To the Profession:

This time through it is even more difficult to bear than ever before. The anxiety, faint hope, the ego destruction create constant queasiness.

There are times when I regret ever having allowed the idealism of social science, research, and teaching to seduce me. And seduce me it did. Certainly, like many of my colleagues I have considered leaving the profession, to be drawn back to it. It is what I love, it is what I do well.

From the time I left graduate school in 1976 to accept a post-doc I have not known from one year to the next where I would be that time the following year. Oh sure, I've been interviewed and even been offered the occasional position. But none were ever on the tenure track (although it was sometimes hinted that something *might* develop). My first teaching job was as a one-year replacement, teaching in an area I could not call my own. It grew into two years. The department then rightly decided to appoint someone with the appropriate expertise. A place was made for me as an associate in a research center at that university. The topic was current—energy policy—the work exciting, and I was even promoted to head a division. But energy and Reagan, especially at universities in the social sciences, do not mix. My job disappeared.

We moved, to follow my wife, who accepted a position in the private sector. After nine months on the sidelines, working way out of my area (I had to earn money somehow) I was fortunate to be offered the position I now hold. It too is a one-year position, "holding" as the department seeks to fill it at the senior level. I love it. Teaching is great. Doing the research I want to do is wonderful. But.

I have of course applied for every position I might be qualified for, and some I may not be. I have put in my time as a vagabond scholar, and I need a position where I know where I'll be next year. I can no longer stand the moves, the paralysis of waiting and wondering.

Some of my students think I'm the best teacher they've ever had. I do have a flair for it. I have a moderate publications/papers record, good if you count funded research. I know the grants/foundations route. I carry my departmental load and get on well with my colleagues. I think I would be an asset to any department.

What then can the profession do for me and others like me (short of a job offer)? First, let us try to restructure the job search process a little. I realize that many departments postpone advertising positions and interview decisions because of budget considerations and other loads. However, I think it possible to expedite the process. Some institutions give very early notification to those whom they will not consider. I commend that. But some never correspond with candidates, except perhaps to send out the ubiquitous race/gender questionnaire. We veterans of the process know after a while that no news means no. There nevertheless always remains a residual of hope. The department has deadlocked, perhaps I'll be the compromise candidate. They're too busy, and haven't gotten around to it. I know informing failed candidates costs money, but for no other reason than good will, we need to know.

Second, some of us try to respond only to notices we feel our background merit. More than once I have applied for positions I felt eminently qualified for, only to learn that someone whose background was no match for the published ad had accepted the job. That breeds a certain contempt for the process and for the department. It causes us to wonder if by not responding to ads for which we are not "qualified," we had missed an opportunity. If a department has "narrow" requirements, it is in everyone's best interests to advertise the need in that way. If, however, there is uncertainty, then the ad should be general so as not to preclude some who would believe the ad.

There are more fundamental questions. On bad days I question my place in the profession. Can I really cut it? Am I only doing this because I cannot do anything else? Someone once commented that I was one of the two leading scholars on a given subject in the country. My response, then in jest, was to agree, only because there were only two of us in the field. Today, I wonder about the jest. On one level, we more than ever need to

more carefully screen our graduate students and insure that they are fully aware of the outside world. On another, we need to find ways to support and reassure the already walking wounded.

In a related way, there operates, I think, something I have called the "cheerleader phenomenon." Everyone *knows* that cheerleaders are never asked for dates, because it is always assumed that they already have dates. And even if they did not, they surely would not go out with me. I have been told—always second hand of course—that I have been passed over for interviews because the committee felt that even if I were offered the position, I would not accept it. And I have seen this reasoning applied to other candidates. Can we not try to develop an ethic that all applications are made in good faith. Ivy League Ph.D.s are willing to consider small colleges with heavy teaching loads. I know, I am and would. Likewise, search committees should not set candidates aside, just because they "look too good."

Finally, let me offer two somewhat radical suggestions. First, could we not suggest that candidates for assistant professorships submit their credentials to a large APSA committee subdivided into sub-committees along field lines? The committee, at minimum, could provide advice and guidance to the candidates. But second, could this not also be used by departments, seeking to fill positions. In this fashion, *they* could tap the available pool of talent. Departments could use this as one resource in their selection.

In sum, I urge the profession to move towards a reevaluation of the selection process, to develop at minimum, methods which are "candidate friendly" and to seek out ways to help those of us having a hard-go at our careers.

I appreciate your attention.

Wallace Koehler
Vanderbilt University

APSR Back Issues

To the Editor:

Could you please mention in the next issue of *PS* that I have a set of *APSRs* from 1964 to the present which I am willing to sell to the highest bidder.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Joel Margolis
362 State Street
Albany, New York 12210

MODERN LIBERALISM

Conversations with liberal politicians

edited by F. BOLKESTEIN, Minister for Foreign Trade, The Netherlands

1982. x + 292 pages. US \$21.00/Dfl. 45.00. ISBN 0-444-86484-9

The book is about the way in which liberal politicians of the nine different countries view the fundamental problems of present society and in particular the dilemmas of the welfare state. The form chosen is interviews, which makes for easy reading. The emphasis is on practice, as politicians cannot pay themselves the luxury of the theoretical approach. Many subjects come up for discussion, viz. industrial policy and protectionism; trade unions and industrial democracy; decentralisation and the function of Parliament; the integration and defense of Europe; the meaning and future of liberalism.

The interviews make very clear that there is a wide measure of agreement between liberal politicians of various nationalities. This is brought out in a concluding chapter, in which

the different strands are pulled together. There are only two political philosophies in Europe. Socialism is divided as it does not know how to come to terms with its own contradictions. Liberalism has no pat answer to the problems of today but at least it provides a clear and consistent approach and also points in the right direction. The book will also arouse interest in the United States, where liberalism has a different connotation from the one it has in Europe.

Interviews with:

Jean François Deniau, Per Federspiel, Jo Grimond, Giovanni Malagodi, Mino Masani, Wolfgang Mischnick, Jean Rey, Gaston Thorn, Edzo Toxopeus.



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