

Communications

(The following letter to Gerald Houseman, the proposer of the Constitutional Amendment on the Option to Receive the American Political Science Review is published at the suggestion of the writer, Professor David Kettler.)

Dear Gerald Houseman,

I just want to explain very briefly why I will not myself sign or circulate your petition to allow APSA members to opt out of the APSR subscription. If it makes any sense to remain in the APSA at all (and I grant that this is a debatable issue) then the reasons must include some thought that what political scientists as a group say or do matters, and that consequently it is worthwhile to participate in an organization which can in some measure influence these outcomes. But all the linkages involved here are very weak: the mattering is tenuous; the groupness is tenuous; the participation is mostly vicarious. The APSR is one of the few factors strengthening each of these dimensions. One of the ways in which the Association or its agencies *matter* is in the power of the APSR to define the limits of legitimate political science, its terms of reference. If that power were substantially weakened, there would be less and less to "reform." Now it may be, as granted earlier, that this should be done, that one ought to liquidate the operation; but that isn't a task that interests me.

On quite another level, it seems to me that I need routinely to be subjected to the mild pressure generated by the arrival of the APSR to find out what this complex intellectual movement we sometimes call "mainstream political science" is up to. I confess that I can usually withstand the pressure, or that it doesn't move me beyond a scanning of the précis; but that's all right. When I think of all the pains I take trying to dope out what a Heidegger or a Hegel or a de Maistre or a St. Augustine is up to, I think that it may be justified to struggle a bit once in a while with the work of contemporaries whose efforts I elsewhere treat as important signs, symptoms, challenges, etc. To the extent that I don't do this (or don't do it all the time or right away or carefully enough), I add it to my already long list of deficiencies; but I don't parade my failure as a slogan of reform. We should read the APSR. We should write for the APSR. We should try to transform the universe of discourse reflected, reproduced and influenced by the APSR, if we have a more adequate context to propose.

As for the notion that dropping the APSR requirement would strengthen the membership by preventing the "turning-off" and/or lowering the cost, I think that it is spurious on two grounds. I see no special value in members who stand in no essential relationship to the central activities of the association - and being actively

"turned-off" is, of course, such a relationship. And I doubt that there would be any saving. Unless the economics of the thing have changed drastically since the long-ago days when I was directly involved in it, the APSR depends heavily on advertising income. Advertising income depends heavily on universality of circulation. Cut the one, you cut the other. If you continue to put the journal out, you have to raise the subsidy and thus the general membership dues. Aha, you say, what about improving the attractiveness of the journal, enhancing its marketability? Nonsense. We are specialists or popularizers or pedagogues, most of the time, almost all. The APSR is a collective good (or evil!); if we don't support it by taxation, it won't be supported, except to the extent that it goes particularistic in principle as well as in tendency.

As I write this, the issues seem clearer and more important, and I think I'll send a copy to PS.

Sincerely yours,

David Kettler,
Trent University

To the Editor:

I am engaged on a study of the life and work of Professor Harold Laski, the British-born lecturer in political science who spent a substantial part of his professional life in the United States. For nearly one-third of his teaching career (he died in 1950) he was associated with American universities and colleges and made many friendships which lasted over the years.

I am seeking personal reminiscences, recollections of his personality and assessments of his influence and work and would like to hear from readers who knew Mr. Laski.

As I contemplate visiting the United States I would be glad to meet former pupils and associates of Mr. Laski if this could be arranged. However, in the first place, I would be grateful if readers who knew him, in either America or Britain, would write to me at 16, The Vineries, Enfield, Middlesex EN1 3DQ, England.

Granville Eastwood

To the Editor:

Now that my two volumes have appeared,¹ all data in the study of interest groups and elite interaction are now available for publication. The following citation is suggested: Robert Presthus, *Elite Interaction Study* (funded by *Conseil des Arts du Canada*), York University, Toronto, 1968-72. Complete sets of data are

Communications

available on tape (\$40.00, plus postage), comprising about 14,000 cards and including the following information: Random samples of legislators (N-376), senior officials (N-482), and interest group executives (N-1,404) in Ottawa, Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec; and Washington, D.C., Michigan, Louisiana, and Washington state. Hour-long interview schedules include the following categories:

1. Biographical data and SES scale (Hollingshead), (17 items);
2. Interest group structure and size, membership, etc. (25 items);
3. Personal interaction among elites, frequency, perceived legitimacy, media and effectiveness of interaction (25 items);
4. Attitudes toward interest groups (22 items); and
5. Political values: liberalism-conservatism, efficacy, alienation, cognitive perceptions of the political system (26 items).

Robert Prethus
Institute of Political Science
University of Goteborg

¹ *Elite Accommodation in Canadian Politics* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1973); *Elites in the Policy Process* (ibid., 1974).