

Communications

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Heinz Eulau's paean to me for having brought political scientists together (Fall, 1974) forces blushes to my non-ideological cheeks. I blush all the more, however, at his inclusion of Mao, Marx, Marcuse, and Mills in his pantheon of political scientists. Perhaps someday a Sinologist will discover that Mao's thoughts during the Long March were primarily concerned with dependent and independent variables, but no empirical evidence to that effect currently exists. Prior to publication of Professor Eulau's letter, I had thought that the last person to confuse politicians with political scientists was Hubert Humphrey. It is more encouraging to note Professor Eulau's acceptance of Merriam, Key, Lasswell, Wilson, and Schattschneider as members of the profession, even though it was apparently only at the last moment that he remembered that Lasswell is indeed among the living. The Caucus does not bestow honorary memberships—if it did, Professor Eulau's pungent prose style alone would surely qualify him for one—but will be delighted to include him, Truman, Dahl, Deutsch, and Almond among its members should they care to pay their dues. Judging from the latest APSA election results, it begins to look as if the Caucus approach to the discipline has won a majority of adherents within the profession. It would be a pity if Professors Eulau et al. permitted themselves to molder in the discarded trappings of a dethroned oligarchy.

Philippa Strum
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To the Editor:

I would like to continue the sporadic dialogue that has developed in this column on the subject of the book-publishing industry and our relation to it as practicing scholars. I am primarily concerned with commercial publishers who enjoy the lion's share of the market in political science though the problems I have in mind are also reflected in the practices of university presses as the letter must adjust to a market environment shaped by the commercial houses.

The problem is that the market for books that appeal to a scholarly audience rather than to undergraduates has dried up. Suitability as an undergraduate textbook rather than significance as a contribution to political science has become the criterion in evaluating booklength manuscripts for publication. There is no publisher interest in serious scholarly books; only textbooks—nay, only elementary textbooks—that promise wide adoption and hence *cash*.

I am not shocked by the economic realities of

book publishing; obviously business is business for publishers as well as the phone company. What distresses me is that we as a scholarly community have done nothing to protect our interests in this situation; certainly our interests do not lie in frustrating the production and dissemination of serious scholarship. Journals cannot take the place of books, our journals are in any event hopelessly overburdened, and the book-length exposition of a serious thesis has a place in scholarly exchange which we simply cannot afford to deny.

The publisher's position of course, is that he must go where the market is and the market is in volume sales of assigned texts for undergraduates, not in books that will appeal to scholars. The irony is that it is we, the scholars—the professors—who *create* the undergraduate market. What freshman would seek out a series of texts (readers, modules, workbooks, commercial reprints) without our prescription?

We have been slow to learn that we are indispensable to publishers and we have been lax in demanding our due. The publisher, as he feeds on our required lists, should be made to feel that he has a responsibility to the discipline of political science as a whole, that good business relations dictate a willingness to serve the scholarly community across the board. While publishing serious scholarly books may well not be profitable as an exercise in itself, it ought to be perceived at the very least, as a necessary operating cost—as an overhead—as the price of gaining access to the student market.

How do we do it? I am not so much concerned with the precise solution at this time as I am with our beginning the search that will lead to a solution. I do however, have an idea for starters. Suppose that we established—perhaps through the columns of *PS*—a list, if not of censured publishers, then at least of “four-star” publishers that have shown a commitment to the discipline as a whole. Where the textbook offerings of competing publishers were equally satisfactory within the broad category of useful student material, professors could show preference for the offerings of publishers committed to the discipline. The precise algorithm (assuming one was needed) for computing the broad category ranking of any publisher could include some textbook/scholarly book ratio so as to avoid penalizing the smaller houses. Formulae are not important at this stage however; the pressing need is to consider how we can begin to protect scholarship and hence ourselves.

It would be easy enough to form some APSA committee to tackle the details of this matter; a committee with appropriate jurisdiction may already exist. The point is that the present

situation is intolerable. It works most against the younger, lesser-known scholar who is least able to tie in the publication of a serious manuscript with the promise to write a publisher-instigated text. The present situation is at the very least, an insult to us all and we must do something about it. I hope that *PS* can become a forum for pursuing this matter.

Allan W. Lerner
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To the Editor:

As a political scientist as well as an editor of college texts, I can understand Professor Werlin's chagrin (*PS*, Fall, 1974) at discovering that a book he wants to use in a course has gone out of print. And when that book is a fine contribution to the literature of political science, its unavailability is doubly regrettable.

Professor Werlin's suggestions that APSA collect letters urging the reprinting of certain titles might conceivably be useful in the long run; today several firms specialize in reissuing by photo-offset small high-priced editions of out-of-print books that their market surveys indicate are in demand.

For current course use, however, the difficulty is not that the publisher is ignorant of how many copies of a book he could sell; on the basis of several years' past sales he knows this fairly precisely. Rather, the stumbling block is that the sales the publisher knows he can expect have fallen below the quantity he must sell in order to make reprinting economically feasible. (Of course, books *can* be reprinted in small quantities—but only at a cost-per-book prohibitive to course use.)

The decision to let any book go out of print is not one a publisher makes lightly. Unfortunately, in today's economy, academic publishers—like colleges—are being forced to make more hard and unpleasant decisions.

Denise Rathbun
Editor
Praeger Publishers, Inc.

To the Editor:

After responding to an opening listed at The University of California, San Diego, in the *APSA Personnel Newsletter*, we received a rather candid letter from the Acting Chairman of the Department of Political Science, Dr. Martin Shapiro. After something he describes as an exercise in "crystal ball gazing," Dr. Shapiro informed us that we "should assign a relatively low probability to obtaining a position." He admits "it may appear presumptuous" but unabashedly goes on to declare "that we ought to consider the same kind of junior people that Harvard, Yale, and Berkeley are looking at," people who "have especially distinguished graduate training," and "who show clear signs of becoming major research scholars and leading members of the profession."

While such a communication does not violate the letter of the resolution obliging member schools to publish openings, it blatantly violates its spirit by implicitly ruling out a certain segment of young scholars for competition. Such tasteless candor is not to be condoned and its practice should be discouraged.

Let us also take this opportunity to remind Dr. Shapiro and others who share his views on recruitment, that no single group of schools has a monopoly on quality graduate training. Our profession stands to lose if we encourage the perpetuation of such an attitude. University departments of political science can stand on their own merits.

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