

COMMUNICATIONS

To The Editor:

As many members of the Association are now aware, there came into existence at the Convention in Chicago last fall a group within the Association calling itself The Caucus for a New Political Science. This group, despite its spontaneous and wholly unpremeditated origins, continues to exist. More importantly, it continues to draw support for its principles and plans, and these are now sufficiently developed to be formally reported to the profession.

The spark which brought the Caucus into existence was the treatment afforded certain resolutions introduced at the Association's business meeting on Wednesday afternoon at the Convention. What was disturbing to many at the Convention about this treatment was not only that it resulted in the defeat or shelving of the particular resolutions but also that it seemed to stem from a conviction that major partisan issues of the day lay beyond the proper professional concerns of the Association. A comparable conviction appeared to have dominated the organization of the panels at the Convention generally. Indeed, there was every appearance of an across the board effort to preclude formal study and discussion of all of the great social and political dilemmas facing American democracy today.

Subsequent reflection suggests that there are two major explanations for this state of affairs, one formal and having to do with the professional character of the Association, and the other having to do with its particular history and traditions. The two explanations together indicate that the Association's unconcern for the political anxieties of the contemporary world is a deep-seated and long-term problem.

Formally, the Convention's panels, following the patterns of the Association's diverse professional interests, are organized around topics each resulting from a subdivision of the major fields of political science. The predictable consequence is more than a profusion of possible topics. The consequence is also that the Convention's program as a whole is inevitably a spacious aggregation of highly scattered, narrowly defined, and individually sponsored papers. And these papers in turn, reflecting as they must the personal professional activities of their diverse authors, are more concerned to lay out particularized academic subject matters than to investigate complex and

perhaps insoluble social problems of large and general significance.

At the same time, the Association backs away from immediate involvement in the political issues of the day for reasons particular to itself. It was founded in major part by men determined "to make democracy work" by teaching "good citizenship," and much of the work of the Association's membership over the years was devoted to a descriptive political science which laboriously detailed for the edification of the citizenry the facts of American political institutions and practices. But the commitment, often explicit, as often only indirectly felt, to the objective of "good" citizenship dampened criticism of those institutions and practices. Obviously, people will not be goaded into greater political activity by a spirit prepared to throw into doubt even the very principles of democracy itself. More subtly, the commitment to good citizenship carried with it a prejudgment of the fundamental issue: if democracy did not work, the fault could not lie in the institutions but only in the ignorance and apathy of the citizenry. Teaching good citizenship is no longer popular. But the residue of bias against searching, critical examination of the weaknesses of America's democratic institutions remains as a dominant mood in the Association formally.

But not informally. That there is a new spirit coming up in the Association is proved by the sudden and forceful emergence of the Caucus for a New Political Science. This spirit, impatient alike with over professionalized particularizations and general academic irrelevance, impels those of us who are attuned to it to attempt as best we can to mark out new directions for our researches and discussions.

The Caucus came into existence in less than 36 hours, during which time it held three meetings each double the size of its predecessors, adopted a title and a series of resolutions, elected an executive committee of thirteen including four officers and collected a modest "kitty" and a membership list of more than 225 names.

One resolution passed by the Caucus called upon the Association's Program Committee to devote a full day of the 1968 Convention in Washington to the issue of the war in Vietnam. This demand has been refused but there are assurances that the war will receive considerably more attention from the 1968 program

than it did in 1967. The Caucus also called upon the officers of the Association to poll the Association's full membership on their attitudes toward the war. This demand was likewise refused, but, for a variety of reasons, it is possible that the Caucus will not elect to press the issue. A third resolution of the Caucus called upon the Association to resist efforts of the House Un-American Activities Committee to obtain membership lists of campus organizations. As this resolution may require of the Association an amendment to its constitution, an immediate reaction from the Association ought not to be expected.

However, the major resolutions adopted by the Caucus were its resolution of purposes and the resolution with which it concluded its work in Chicago. Both may be taken at face value and are as follows:

RESOLUTION 1

Whereas the American Political Science Association, at its conventions and in its journal, has consistently failed to study, in a radically critical spirit, either the great crises of the day or the inherent weaknesses of the American political system, be it resolved that this caucus promote a new concern in the Association for our great social crises and a new and broader opportunity for us all to fulfill, as scholars, our obligations to society and to science.

RESOLUTION 5

Be it resolved that one of the primary concerns of the Caucus be to stimulate research in areas of political science that are of crucial importance and that have been thus far ignored.

These resolutions determined that the Executive Committee created by the Caucus would devote its full energies after Chicago to one objective only, the putting on of a program of its own at Washington next fall. The officers of the Caucus have initiated extended discussions with the officers of the Association and these gentlemen have been sympathetic and generous. The Caucus' program is in no way supposed to conflict with or hamper the program planned by the regular committees of the Association. It is designed to supplement that program, to expand it in the direction of greater relevance to the political problems of the day. To sustain this relevance and to focus it sharply, all aspects of the Caucus' program are organized under the single title *American Democracy in Crisis* as follows:

Panel 1. Do the 1968 Elections Offer Meaningful Choices?

Panel 2. Race, Power, and Money.

Panel 3. The Draft and the Rights of the Conscripted Citizens.

Panel 4. The Creation of "News": Mass Media and Their Impact on American Politics.

Panel 5. The Adequacy of America's Dominant Liberal Ideology.

Panel 6. Patterns of Local Government and Crime and Corruption.

Panel 7. Vietnam and Patterns of American Foreign Policy.

Panel 8. New Modes of Radical Political Thought and Action in America.

Plenary Session. Does America Have the Political Resources for World Leadership?

The details of the Caucus' program are still being developed in active cooperation with the officers of the Association, but it is already agreed that some portions of it will be put on concurrently with the Association's own and that the balance will occur on Saturday afternoon and evening.

The Executive Committee has also decided to serve notice that it intends to bring forward in the prescribed way the following amendment to the constitution of the Association so as to broaden permanently the concerns of the Association for contemporary political life. The proposed amendment would add to Article II a new sentence so that the whole of this Article would read as follows:

ARTICLE II: OBJECTS

1. It shall be the purpose of this Association to encourage the study of Political Science, including Political Theory, Political Institutions, Politics, Public Law, Public Administration and International Relations.

2. The Association as such is non-partisan. It will not support political parties or candidates. It will not commit its members on questions of public policy nor take positions not immediately concerned with its direct purpose as stated above. *But the Association nonetheless actively encourages, in its membership and its journal, research in and concern for significant contemporary political and social problems and policies, however controversial and subject to partisan discourse in the community at large these may be.*

In conclusion, it should be stressed that the Caucus for a New Political Science is a group *within* the Association. On the other hand, within the Association the Caucus is not dedicated to any orthodoxy—or unorthodoxy—in methodology, ideological persuasion, or subject matter interests. It is concerned to study

problems, problems which the Association may well be charged with having neglected. It is aware that to study these problems involves risks, the most grave of which is that partisanship may overwhelm academic detachment and

scholarly standards. But that risks exist does not absolve us from our responsibilities. As political scientists we should spend more time studying politics—and less studying each other.

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