

Association News

continued financial solvency. Elected as officers of the LSS for two-year terms for 1983-85 were Chair, Charles S. Bullock III, University of Georgia; Program Chairman (1983-84) and Member-at-Large (1984-85), Keith E. Hamm, Texas A&M University; Secretary-Treasurer, Lawrence D. Longley, Lawrence University; and Member-at-Large, Linda L. Fowler, Syracuse University.

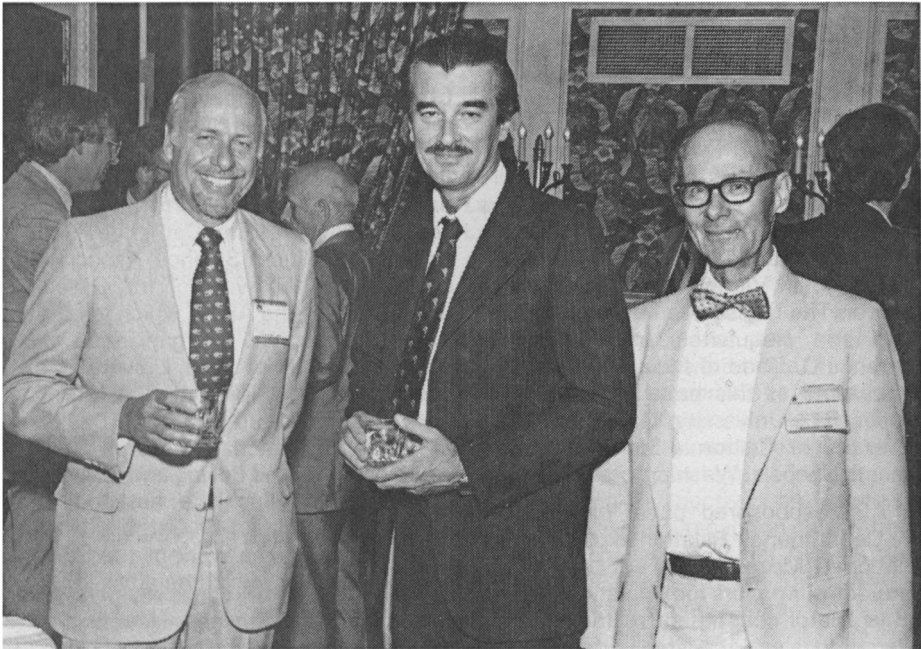
Scholars interested in legislative politics were reminded that dues were due as of September 1, and are \$3 until January 1, 1984 when they increase to \$5. Legislative Studies Section membership includes a subscription to the *LSS Newsletter* which reports in detail on legislative professional conferences and activities and inclusion in the LSS Membership Directory and Research Register issued yearly each March. In order to join (or to renew membership) in the Legislative Studies Section of the APSA, one should send a check for \$3 (\$5 after January 1, 1984), along with a listing of professional address and phone number and current legislative research interests, to:

Lawrence D. Longley, Secretary/Treasurer, Legislative Studies Section, APSA, Department of Government, Lawrence University, Appleton, WI 54912. □

Lasswell Symposium Honors Holsti, Kramer, and MacRae; Science of Politics Featured

Carol Nechemias
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Harold Lasswell pioneered the use of scientific methods to study politics. Consequently, it was especially appropriate that APSA's second annual plenary session in his honor, the Lasswell Symposium, investigated the extent to which political science meets the norms of scientific inquiry. Chaired by APSA President William H. Riker (University of Rochester), the panel was composed of Lasswell Symposium honorees Kalevi J. Holsti (University of British Columbia), Gerald H. Kramer (California Institute of



Lasswell Symposium honorees Kalevi J. Holsti of the University of British Columbia, Gerald H. Kramer of California Institute of Technology, and Duncan MacRae, Jr. of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (left to right) following their presentations on the science of politics.

Technology), and Duncan MacRae, Jr. (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), who addressed the following questions: Has political science acquired ways of looking at the world which are consistent with those of the natural sciences? What are the limits to what we can explore with scientific methods?

Focusing on the field of international relations, Holsti discussed two problem areas where the study of politics falls short of scientific ideals. These areas include, first, whether an identifiable field of international politics exists; and second, whether the science of international politics extends beyond parochialism to a global community of scholars.

According to Holsti, a coherent field of international relations did exist from the 17th century to the 1960s. A classical tradition held sway, unchallenged by the behavioral revolution, and marked by consensus with respect to what constituted an appropriate research agenda. This agenda focused on matters related to the causes of war, order, security, conditions of peace, and the use of power and influence.

Since the 1960s, however, this agenda has been attacked as inaccurate, irrelevant, overly restrictive, and concerned with the wrong units of analysis. Holsti cited several challenges to the classical tradition—for example, dependency theory which focuses on non-state actors—that have shifted the substantive focus from “war and peace to the causes of exploitation and the conditions for global equality.”

“If international politics is defined as the relations between centers and peripheries in the context of a world capitalist system, what happens to the problems of war, peace, security, and order?” Holsti asked.

Acknowledging that some scholars see these trends as additions to rather than replacements of the traditional research agenda, Holsti explored the extent to which unity might be forged between contending paradigms. He noted that some differences might be bridged by emphasizing the study of power and influence. Overall, however, there has been a breakdown of consensus with re-



Judy Weisberg and Carol Nechemias at a reception in honor of Judge Abner Mikva (Federal Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit) given by the Congressional Fellowship Program following the Saturday night plenary session on gender politics.

spect to an “identifiable field” of international relations. “We may well end up with no field at all, but with only a competing set of problem areas,” Holsti argued.

A second “keystone of a scientific enterprise is the search for generalizations . . . that transcend temporal or spacial location,” Holsti continued. Science is an international enterprise, yet Holsti pointed to parochialism in the use of scientific methods to study international relations. Indeed, he regarded the practitioners or “methods missionaries” as consisting almost entirely of Americans, along with branches in a few other countries. “The behavioral revolution has hardly swept the world,” Holsti said. Despite the growth of an infrastructure of international organizations and communications, the trend has been toward increased parochialism rather than toward the emergence of a global community of scholars united by a commitment to the use of scientific methods in the study of politics. For Holsti this

parochialism promotes narrowness in subject matter and a "theoretical hyperactivity" characterized by the depiction of national experiences in universal terms.

Holsti concluded that while the science of international politics "has in many respects advanced significantly," there is "yet no science of international politics" in the sense of having "a coherent set of verified propositions connected logically into a grand theory of behavior at the international level."

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Gerald Kramer in his address, "Political Science as Science," widened his lens to the discipline of political science as a whole but came to a conclusion similar to that of Holsti. Kramer first distinguished science from the humanities, philosophy, and engineering—all of which are encompassed by political science—and argued that much of the best scholarship in the discipline occurs in political philosophy.

To evaluate our level of scientific knowledge about politics, it is necessary to "examine science as it's actually done, by scientists, not how it's interpreted . . . by historians or philosophers." According to Kramer, the key elements of science are understanding, risk, and theoretical simplicity. "The goal of science," he said, "is understanding, not prediction or control," and this understanding is of a particular sort, different from philosophical understanding, "with different ground rules and different aims."

Political scientists, however, "use the term 'theory' to encompass understanding in both senses," with a resulting confusion of thinking that "we're doing science when we are actually doing philosophy, or vice versa."

He cited as an example the pluralist-radical debate which "sometimes looks like a scientific debate" but is not. He reasoned that neither the radical or pluralist paradigm could, in accordance with the scientific method, "be fully decomposed to a set of component parts

susceptible to intensive analysis one by one." Instead, each paradigm is a Gestalt supported by empirical data—"not the same thing as a well-defined theoretical hypothesis confronting data and risking falsification."

This element of risk "seems an inherent part of all serious scientific research," according to Kramer. Risky hypothesis-testing, in turn, leads toward theoretical simplification. "The task of science . . . is to demystify experience and simplify it."

Political science only rarely succeeds in the scientific task of developing simple theoretical models which are then confronted by data. Part of the problem lies in the historical development of formal theory whose early results were negative (for example, impossibility theorems) and in the fact that formal models "still have not been seriously tested against quantitative real-world data," specifically because formal theory "at present simply isn't all that rich in testable empirical content."

However, the infrequent confrontation between theory and evidence in political science has other sources as well. For example, much existing empirical evidence "is simply not the stuff of which theory can be tested" in part because empirical political scientists are not performing experiments most relevant to theorists and because we have a "casual tradition in reporting research results."

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A related reason for the theory-evidence gap is that "in political science we're not nearly so self-conscious about error"—the difference between "an actual event and our measurement of it." As a result, there are frequently no well-founded facts with which the theorist can work.

For Duncan MacRae the limits to what we can explore utilizing scientific methods are evident in the following question: "Who's going to win the next presidential election?" He described

science as especially concerned with the sharing of contributions publicly and the capacity to predict on the basis of well-defined procedures. But political science runs the danger of becoming "more scientific but not more relevant" if attempts are made to treat human behavior as similar to that of rats.

According to MacRae, three factors limit the political scientist's ability to predict: first, lack of rigor in defining key terms; second, change in the subject matter over time; and, third, the presence of conflict and strategy. Utilizing the critical elections studies, MacRae discussed how failure precisely to define concepts like "critical election" and "party alignment" had muddied scholarly endeavors and made it more difficult to ask, "What are the intervals for critical elections?"

Difficulties in predicting are also engendered by change. What happens when the social bases underlying critical elections are transformed? Our findings do not necessarily transcend particular time periods or institutions. Propositions valid in one period are not in another. Or, as MacRae, quoting Morris Fiorina, put it, "yesterday's truth is today's fiction."

Some situations are more difficult to predict than others, particularly those involving conflict and strategy. MacRae noted the "shifting sands of the political world": how participants in the political process seek change in ways difficult to anticipate and how some strategies, like those of presidential candidates, are unknown to political scientists.

On the other hand, some circumstances facilitate prediction, such as when the focus is on the behavior of a large number of individuals (rather than on elites), when people are not reinterpreting their world—that is, stable rather than revolutionary times—and when there is no substantial conflict marked by changing strategies. MacRae linked these conditions to political scientists' success in predicting voting behavior and coalition formation.

In order to enhance our capacity to predict, MacRae argued that scholars should direct their attention toward the "non-scientific aspects" of political science, the values that guide behavior. He con-

cluded with the following toast to political science, "May it never be merely a science." □

Plenary Panelists Analyze Gender Differences in Politics

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Do women see the world in a different way than men? At the 1983 annual meeting, the plenary session on "Gender Politics in the 80's" addressed this issue as well as others related to women's changing relationship with the political world. A distinguished panel, chaired by Barbara Sinclair (University of California, Riverside) included political scientists Jean Elstain (University of Massachusetts), Virginia Sapiro (University of Wisconsin, Madison), and Ruth Mandel (Rutgers University), social work professor Grace Holt (University of Illinois,



Chair of the plenary session, Gender Politics in the 80's, Barbara Sinclair of the University of California at Riverside, responds to questions.