

The British Library of Political and Economic Science

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The planned rehousing of the British Library of Political and Economic Science, the library of the London School of Economics, is an international development of great significance for all political scientists. The library ranks as one of the great libraries of the world and is the largest devoted exclusively to the social sciences. Due to overcrowding and the difficulty of gaining direct access to much of the vast collection, the library, located in the School on Houghton Street, has been a difficult place for academics to work. The location of the School in a crowded part of London has also prevented the expansion that the large and growing library requires. The recent availability of a large building immediately adjacent to the School, and originally built to bear the weight of books and journals, has led to this worldwide appeal for funds to purchase the building and use it for rehousing the library. The cost of the building and site is £3.78 million, to which will need to be added the cost of conversion. The British Government, through the University Grants

Committee and the Court of the University of London, is providing nearly £2 million towards this figure, and the School has launched an appeal, under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins, to raise the remainder of the sum required. The appeal has received the support of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, who is Chancellor of the University of London, the leaders of the major political parties, Edward Heath, the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Jeremy Thorpe, the Leader of the Liberal Party. Many prominent academics and public figures, familiar names to American social scientists, such as Raymond Aron, Isaiah Berlin, Denis Brogan, Alan Bullock, Arthur Burns, E. H. Carr, Ralf Dahrendorf, F. A. von Hayek, Michael Oakeshott and Pierre Trudeau, have written publicly in support of the appeal and in appreciation of the library. The appeal is an urgent one, as the £1.8 million which needs to be raised by public appeal must be assured by October 1973. In response, campaigns for contributions have been launched both in Great Britain and in many other countries of the world, because the London School of Economics has traditionally attracted students and scholars from many lands. Approximately a third of all students are from overseas, and the percentage is even larger for graduate students. Of the overseas students, approximately a third are from North America. This strong overseas representation which gives the School some of its distinctive character, justifies the present appeal for funds on a worldwide basis.

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It is probable that many here present
would wish me to explain why I have, till now,
abstained from all the usual practices of a
candidate, & only now, for the first time appear
at a meeting of the electors. My reasons were
stated in the letter in which I undertook to be
made a candidate; but that need not hinder me
from repeating them. When I said in my letter that
for myself I did not desire to be in Par^l, I meant
what I said. I have no personal objects to
promote by it, while it would involve a great

John Stuart Mill refuses to court the electors of Westminster. From the manuscript of his election speech of 1865 in the collection of the British Library of Political and Economic Science of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The London School of Economics was founded in 1895 and the British Library of Political and Economic Science the following year. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, important figures in the development of social science, together with their associates in the Fabian Society and others, took the initiative in establishing both institutions. The School was based on the model of the *Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques* in Paris. The plan for the library was ambitious, as it was to be a "new laboratory of sociological research". Throughout this century, the School and the library have grown, and many important scholars in the social sciences have been associated with them. The first Professor of Political Science was Graham Wallas who was succeeded by Harold Laski and then Michael Oakeshott. But the study of government is not an isolated discipline at L.S.E. and scholars such as Karl Popper in philosophy, R. H. Tawney in history and F. A. von Hayek in economics will be as familiar to American political scientists.

The library has grown from 12,000 volumes in 1902 to its present size of over 600,000 volumes and a total of more than two million separate items. The holdings cover the whole of the social sciences, including history, philosophy, geography and anthropology, as well as economics, government, sociology, and law. It is an important repository for government documents, not just from Great Britain, but from most countries of the world. In 1971, it received nearly two and a half tons of United States Federal Government documents alone. In addition, it receives approximately 4,300 periodicals, as well as 6,300 official serial publications. While these statistics testify to the size of the collection, they are not particularly informative as to its quality. One member of the library staff has written, "indeed those whose job it is to welcome strangers sometimes get the impression that the Library's chief end is to make available to such readers the precious obscurities which they have been unable to trace elsewhere." Many items in the Library's collection are extremely rare. This includes early pamphlets, such as the collection of English Civil War tracts, and also more modern pamphlets and publications such as election literature which are easily lost and remain uncollected. In the main tradition of political theory and classical political economy, the library has a fine collection of the writings of Smith, Malthus, Mill, Bentham, Ricardo, Petty and others, including many rare presentation copies. Among its valuable manuscripts are the letters of John Stuart Mill to Mrs. Taylor, who became his wife, and to his stepdaughter, Helen. Furthermore, important collections are not confined to English materials, as is witnessed in the excellent collection of Russian documents. A good idea of the subject holdings of the Library may be obtained by consulting the *London Bibliography of the Social Sciences*, which, in fact, is the subject catalogue of the Library. This great work, now at twenty-one volumes, was begun in 1925 and has been a great aid to scholars in the social sciences. It is estimated that 40% of the foreign

publications in the library's collections are not in the British Museum library, and the two can be said to complement each other.

In the new library the entire collection will be available on an "open-stack" plan with the exception of rare or otherwise vulnerable material. The prospect of being able to browse in this splendid collection is most exciting, as scholars usually find this a most important, though often denied, aspect of their research. The proposed provision for research is impressive. Four hundred advanced students and staff engaged in thesis writing will be accommodated in "research areas" with tables, special shelves and lockers. An additional twenty large studies are planned for the use of senior research workers, and carrels will be provided on all stack floors. Manuscripts and rare books will be available in a special reading room. The Periodicals Reading Room will display 1,000 current periodicals and contain seats for fifty readers. In addition there are plans for a Government Publications Reading Room, a Statistics Reading Room, a Map Room, space for reading microfilms, seminar rooms and, of course, a vast provision for the large number of students and visitors who regularly come to work in the library.

The prospect of the new library, containing the great collection of the British Library of Political and Economic Science and located in the center of London near the British Museum, the other libraries of the University of London and special collections located in London, is an exciting one for social scientists. Former students and friends of the School are urged to give generously in support of the appeal. It is also hoped that members of the American Political Science Association will see this cause as a worthy one for the future of a great library, and indeed, for the future development of the social sciences. Donations large and small, which will be tax deductible, should be made payable to "The American Friends of L.S.E.", and sent to Mrs. Joan Eckstein, 94 Maclean Circle, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

Bangalore University Institute of Social and Economic Change

The newly established Institute of Social and Economic Change of Bangalore University will welcome gifts of books in the area of social change, economics and political development, applied anthropology and theory and methodology according to its co-Director M. N. Srinivas. Books should be sent to Professor M. N. Srinivas, co-Director, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore University, Bangalore, Mysore, India. For further information with respect to this effort of support, write to R. A. Schermerhorn, Professor Emeritus, Case Western Reserve University, 155 North Cambridge Ave., Claremont, California 91711.