

International Political Science

The Australasian Political Studies Association

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The 22nd Annual Conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association was held at the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University in Canberra at the end of August. It was the largest, best attended, and arguably the most successful conference held by the Association; *mirabile dictu*, it paid for itself and even passed some money over to the Association. Members had a choice of eight panels—Australasian Politics, Public Policy and Administration, Political Theory and Sociology, International Relations and Comparative Politics, Women's Politics, The Politics of the Socialist Countries, Ethnic Politics, and Measurement and Methodology. These often broad categories were not quite broad enough, and a scattering of papers found audiences whenever there was a spare room and a spare hour.

Despite this one success, the affairs of "the other APSA" could be a lot healthier. As everywhere else, we are caught between the millstones of rising costs and more or less static income. As everywhere, there are political scientists in regular academic employment who are not members of the Association and apparently determined to remain so. As the President for 1979-80 I wrote a personal letter to every one of them, suggesting that honor, duty and even rich intellectual rewards all made their immediate application for membership a certain thing. The response—six new members from 180 letters—was execrable for a postal survey, but gratifying for a mail-order item. At last count, approximately 52 percent of those who teach or research in

political science in universities and colleges on a full-time basis were members of the Association. I would be interested to hear of comparative figures.

One of the acceptable explanations is the fissiparous state of discipline. Informal groups within the Association which coalesce about an area study or a problem move in time to the production of a newsletter, the organization of an annual meeting, and the generation of co-authored books and articles. Our experience has been that eventually such groups move out of the main Association. Worse, they cease to offer their articles to the Journal (*Politics*) or their papers to the annual conference. The consequence is that the journal becomes a vehicle for publication about Australasian (i.e., Australian and New Zealand) politics, and that in turn dissuades those who teach and research in other areas (which means most political scientists in the two countries) from regarding membership of and participation in the Association as central to their scholarly concerns. It seems that this, too, is a familiar story.

We are doing what we can to counteract these trends. In November 1980 will appear the first number of the APSA Newsletter, a modest in-house publication intended to keep political scientists in touch. It will be edited by Dr. John Warhurst (ANU) and carry news about the various subgroups, dissertations commenced and completed, appointments, national and international meetings and conferences, and jobs. There will, alas, not be many jobs to advertise. Since 1975 the university systems of Australia and New Zealand have been almost static, at least in terms of money received. All are overwhelmingly government-funded, and the fiscal problems of governments have made tertiary education a candidate for the rack. This has been made politically possible by the levelling out of tertiary enrollments, itself a conse-

quence of demographic patterns and (to some degree) decreasing participation rates, as school-leavers worried about getting a job opt for career now and university education later as a part-time student, an option commonly available.

Political science has kept its numbers and its morale, for the most part, anyway. The late 1970s have been politically interesting times, and the 1980s seem likely to continue to be so. But most university departments of political science find themselves with a considerable body of youngish tenured staff, whose promotional possibilities will decline very quickly. Already it is the general rule that a retirement or resignation at a senior level is followed by an appointment (if at all) at the most junior level. Universities are beginning to explore staff exchanges, but these are still unusual. Political scientists who seek leave without pay to take up a government position or some other equivalent find themselves patted on the back and pushed out the door; the department will find that it has lost all or most of the salary until he or she comes back. And study leave, that jewel in the antipodean academic crown, has been dulled. Once we were entitled to one year every seven, on full pay and with a decent grant for travel; in some universities this was even written into the contract. Now, although the 1/7 fraction still exists, it's harder to get, and serves as a maximum. In general, the member of staff can obtain only six months' leave at any time, and universities are restricted to a limit of 7 percent of staff away on such leave. These conditions together operate to make study leave (now entitled "outside studies program"—a dreadful mouthful) competitive. They are also increasingly expensive, since travel grants are not rising in sympathy with the cost of air travel. If you don't see as many Australian visitors as you used to, at least you'll know why.

All these problems confront the new executives of the Association—President Carole Pateman, Sydney; Vice-President Peter Loveday, ANU; Secretary/Treasurer Rich de Angelis, Flinders. No doubt they'll pass them on in turn, at the 23rd Annual Conference, which will be held at Monash University, Melbourne, in August 1981.