



L. to r., former APSA Presidents C. Herman Pritchett, R. Taylor Cole, Heinz Eulau and Pendleton Herring share a moment with former APSA Executive Director, Evron Kirkpatrick.

- Leon D. Epstein—1978-79
- Warren E. Miller—1979-80
- Seymour Martin Lipset—1981-82
- William H. Riker—1982-83
- Aaron Wildavsky—1985-86
- Samuel P. Huntington—1986-87

Also attending were President Judith N. Shklar, many spouses, and two former Executive Directors of the Association, Evron M. Kirkpatrick and Thomas E. Mann.

APSA Annual Meeting Placement Service Continues to Grow

No matter how much space is set aside for the Annual Meeting Placement Service in recent years, it never seems to be enough. The Atlanta Placement Service registered significant increases in the number of employers using the service, and the number of positions available. The decline in the number of applicants may be an early indication of changing market conditions in academia, or it may simply reflect the decline in applicant numbers that takes place when the Annual Meeting is held outside of Washington, D.C.

Annual Meeting Placement Services, 1986-89

	1986	1987	1988	1989
# Employers	127	143	161	179
# Applicants	487	423	545	483
# Positions	213	227	252	282
Other*	6	9	4	15

*Refers to listings with an unspecified number of vacancies.

The End of Realignment?

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Chaired by Professor Harold F. Bass, Jr., of Ouachita Baptist University, the 1989 Harold Lasswell Symposium focused on a household word within our profession—the concept of realignment. Although all the papers, presented, respectively, by Professor Joel H. Silbey of Cornell University, Professor Everett Carl Ladd of the University of Connecticut and the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research,¹ and Professor Byron E. Shafer of Nuffield College (Oxford University), attacked the utility of realignment, their critiques shared little in common other than the view that realignment has obscured more than it clarifies. Faced with this critical onslaught, the discussants, Professor Walter Dean Burnham of the University of Texas, Austin, and Samuel T. McSeveney of Vanderbilt University, provided a counterbalance to what had become a "coroner's inquest."

Silbey presented an alternative approach to periodizations of American electoral history which rely on critical realigning elections. He argued that while significant changes have occurred in the American political universe, these changes were not necessarily coterminous with realigning elections. Characterizing the first 50 years under the Constitution as ones of a "volatile non-party system" Silbey noted that the 1828 election could not be labelled a realigning election. He pointed out that

there were "no alignments to realign from"; few Americans possessed stable party commitments. Aligning episodes could take place only after 1838, when stable, predictable voting coalitions had established themselves. For Silbey, the period from 1838 to 1893 represents one era, interrupted only by realignment in the pre-civil war period. What looms large, however, are the "rock-like party loyalties" of the citizenry.

According to Silbey, the early 1890s saw the reshaping of the party system. While advocates of realignment theory might focus on shifting coalitions, Silbey emphasized the destruction of the parties' central role in the political system as the key ingredient. The new era ushered in declining voter turnout, ticket splitting, and greater electoral instability. The realignment associated with the New Deal could only delay but not end party decline. Indeed, Silbey views the post-1934 era as one of "post-realignment," with the phenomenon consigned to the dust heap of history.

Ladd's paper compared the 35-year preoccupation with realignment to "waiting for Godot." Suggesting that the concept is too confining and deflects attention from changes in the party system, Ladd proposed that research address questions that focus on changes in the relationships between issues and cleavages, the social and ideological make-up of society, and party organization, including nominations and campaigning.

For Ladd, party eras are distinctive because of changes in society—changes in the mass media, educational levels, occupational structures, the civil rights revolution, and generational change. New societal eras can generate new party systems even though the political world stubbornly refuses to produce the large-scale partisan changes associated with realigning elections.

Shafer also expressed dissatisfaction with the concept of realignment. He called the preoccupation election after election with realignment "an intellectual waste." He asserted that a stable electoral order had emerged out of the 1960s, with a Republican-controlled White House, a generally Democratic Senate, and a solidly Democratic House of Representatives.

Societal divisions underlie this pattern and find expression in the presidency, an institution which symbolizes cultural values and foreign policy, and in Congress, the symbol of welfare, service, and individual benefits. The American political system thus neatly accommodates inconsistencies, cross-cutting preferences and social divisions, and realignment has "nothing to say about this stable pattern."

Burnham defended realignment models, noting that "30 years is a short time in the history of an idea." He contended that the "wells of creativity in this area have not yet run dry" and that no model of large-scale change could succeed without incorporating punctuated change as an important feature. Moreover, in contrast to Ladd's "waiting for Godot" posture or Silbey's "post-realignment era," Burnham asserted that the 1968-72 period did involve realignment and that it was "right on time."

Warning against predictions that realigning elections are phenomena of a bygone era, McSeveney pointed out that the realigning election of 1932 would have been unforeseen in 1928, just as the coming of a Republican-presidential era had been unexpected. He saw the concept of realignment as a necessary but not sufficient explanation for understanding the evolution of the American electoral system.

The Lasswell Symposium thus explored a diversity of views concerning the adequacy of the idea of realignment for understanding the electoral order.

Note

1. Ladd could not be present and his paper was delivered by Harold Bass, Jr.

Dahl Receives 1989 Lippincott Award

Devon Groves
American Political Science Association

Robert A. Dahl of Yale University received the Benjamin A. Lippincott Award for a work of exceptional quality by a living