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# Letters to the Editor

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## Indonesian Press Library

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To improve its members' knowledge and skill in the area of journalism, the Indonesian Journalists Association (Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia, PWI) of North Sumatra plans to set up a library which will provide a relatively adequate reference to the members themselves. But, to set it up, we are facing various problems, especially in getting books in line with the area wrestled by the journalists.

In short, it means that we are facing a serious problem finding books on (1) journalism, (2) mass communications, and (3) political and social studies.

For that purpose, it will highly be appreciated if you could help us by contributing as many books as possible in the above categories.

It is necessary to inform you that Medan, where our office is located, is the second largest city in Indonesia in terms of newspaper publication. In the 1.7 million capital of North Sumatera Province, there are at least 15 universities, some of which have departments of publicists and political and social sciences. So, in this point of view, we believe that the library we planned to set up will be very advantageous to the students of those universities. Since the would-be library is to be open to the public, it will also be useful to those who love reading.

We thank you very much for helping us to complement the library we dreamed of.

Mohammad Yazid  
Chairman

## Socialism and Equality: A Reply to Dye and Zeigler

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In their "Socialism and Equality in Cross-National Perspective" (*PS*, Winter 1988), Dye and Zeigler have pulled together evidence and argument on whether socialist systems are or are not more egalitarian (economically) than capitalist systems. Even if no paper can be conclusive on the point, theirs casts some doubt on those who have held that socialist systems are more egalitarian, although I do not think they take sufficient account of the qualifications I attached to my estimates in *Politics and Markets*, which they question. In any case, theirs is a valuable contribution.

The purpose of this letter is not to attempt a refutation. It is instead to raise a question about their reading skills as illustrated in their handling of *Politics and Markets* on some points. Three examples.

Their first paragraph attributes to me the foolish proposition that socialist societies are "undeniably" egalitarian. As evidence they then quote me as saying: "It is in the communist provision of . . . some degree of equality . . . that the communist claim to approximate the humanitarian vision . . . seems undeniable." But the quoted sentence—they should read it again—is that a limited communist *claim* is undeniable, not that communist equality is undeniable.

They also allege that (and here I quote them) "the conclusion that socialism produces equality is usually defended on ideological grounds" and then support that allegation with a quote from *Politics and*

*Markets* (a quote about historical aspirations) that says nothing at all about whether socialist systems do or do not produce equality nor anything about ideology. If they will read their allegation and the ostensibly supporting quotation, they will see their error.

They also attribute to me the proposition (their paraphrase) that "communist regimes trade freedom and economic prosperity for a leveling of economic benefits." False, I should think; and I have not found it in my book.

Charles E. Lindblom  
Professor Emeritus  
Yale University

## Part-Time Faculty

The spring 1988 article by Nancy E. McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees describing the woes of "Part-Time Faculty in Political Science: Stepchildren of the Profession" was a much-needed piece of advocacy. Indeed, more articles like this might preserve the integrity of our profession.

However, their conscientious article neglected the central problem: namely, that part-time professors of political science are given nowhere near the same salary and fringe benefits, prorated, as full-time professors.

Perhaps the authors downplayed this because the disparity between part-time and full-time political science faculty is so much greater than most people assume.

From speaking with colleges in different parts of the United States, I have learned that colleges in fall semester 1988 will typically pay only \$1000 to \$1300 for a part-time professor of political science to teach one course. This is outrageous and insulting.

Sadly, some professors do not earn even this small, token amount. Take, for example, someone teaching at Blue Ridge Community College, a growing and prospering school which is part of the State of North Carolina system.

A part-time faculty member in fall 1988 at that state school might earn as much as

\$660, or as little as \$480, for teaching one course. This is truly tragic.

Because part-time teaching is so poorly paid, many qualified political scientists with doctorates are going elsewhere for employment, thereby creating a two-tiered system of teaching within departments.

In short, the part-time faculty will remain "stepchildren of the profession"—and a threat to the profession as well—as long as pay levels remain so demeaning.

Ralph W. Bastedo, Ph.D.  
Hendersonville, N.C.

## Education at Risk

I would like to express my concern with the political tone of the essays included in the *PS* symposium on "Education at Risk?". With one exception, each of the contributors focuses exclusively on threats from the right, specifically fundamentalist Christians. I am not a fundamentalist or even a Christian, but I found the contributors' treatment of Christian fundamentalists both condescending and remarkably insensitive to any legitimate concerns these citizens might have with the direction of American education. For example, none of the articles make any reference to the fact that many recent American history textbooks ignore the critical role played by religion in the development of American society.

Marsha Adler, a lobbyist for People for the American Way, describes in detail the efforts of the religious right to remove books from public schools and libraries that offended their values and sensibilities. But, she says nothing about the efforts of liberal organizations to remove books that offend the sensibilities of women or minorities.

I was particularly offended by the essay, "The Assault on Global Education." The authors would obviously like American foreign policy to be less bellicose. That is, of course, their right. But to describe those who would like America to play a more assertive role in the world and have little faith in the U.N. as "super-patriots," "McCarthyists" and of course "fundamen-

talists" is irresponsible. This article explicitly attacks the views of Secretary of Education William Bennett. Was he, a member of his staff, or indeed anyone who ever voted for Ronald Reagan, invited to contribute to this symposium?

PS has a useful role to play as a forum for the expression of various political views or issues of concern to our profession. But our discipline is ill-served when a symposium is dominated by those who happen to share a particular political orientation—and articulate it in such a polemical manner.

David Vogel  
University of California, Berkeley

## Local Newspaper Editorials

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Professor James W. Davis deserves credit for raising matters often overlooked by political scientists in "Political Scientist as Newspaper Editor: Preparing a Daily Editorial Page," 20 *PS*, No. 2, Spring 1987, 246-252.

Professor Davis went from the political science classroom to the editor's desk; I went the opposite way. I began teaching political science after more than ten years of part-time experience on the editorial board of a chain of weekly newspapers on Long Island, N.Y.

I have a bone to pick with Professor Davis. He writes that editorials about national and international affairs in regional newspapers have practically no impact and "probably amount to nothing so much as pontification" (252). I would like to express an alternative view.

First, I should point out that the newspapers I worked for do not even qualify as regional; they are strictly local newspapers. But I assume from the logic of Professor Davis' argument that disparagement of regional editorials would apply more so to local editorials; and at any rate my defense of local editorials applies as well to regional editorials.

It is true that the impact of editorials is hard to measure, but there are reasons to

believe it is not as little as Professor Davis asserts.

Granted that "most newspaper readers do not read the editorials" (251), enough do to make it worthwhile trying to communicate with them. As Professor Davis admits, government "officials and [political] activists do read or scan them" (251). But a good newspaper with a well-written editorial page will also have loyal editorial readers who are ordinary citizens. Even if only 5% of readers read editorials from time to time, that may amount to hundreds or thousands. The newspaper is adding to the available public debate for those readers, and that should not be undervalued.

Editorial writers know that some editorials are read some of the time, from the letters to the editor that are received and from readers who approach them at public gatherings to talk about the editorials. Most will confirm the puzzling and sometimes frustrating experience that it is not necessarily the important and controversial editorials that generate the most interest, but often editorials that the writer may have thought of as relatively insignificant.

Professor Davis points out that politicians and activists may read editorials for self-interested purposes. But at least the point of the editorial has been brought to their attention. If it contains any fresh reasoning or rhetoric, at least some of them might be influenced by it. Professor Davis describes a rather partisan newspaper; perhaps this would explain why its editorials are often ignored. But many, many American newspapers try to maintain an independent editorial stance in which they rely on the force of argument, not authority, to make their point. Unless their readers are entirely cut off from appeals to reason or interest, their arguments may have some effect. Only sheer scepticism about the possibility of any kind of human communication or persuasion could totally undermine this hope.

Without further explanation, Professor Davis writes that "no member of Congress would want to view editorials as anything like expressions of public opinion in his district" (252). This may be true if the editorials consistently oppose such mem-

bers, but if they are at least moderately balanced, and if they give reasons why they reflect local opinion, any member would do well to consider them expressions of public opinion. One of the reasons editorials are rarely signed is that the writer is encouraged to think of himself or herself as trying to express a wider consensus of opinion and not just personal prejudices. It is a myth that newspaper editorials usually express just the personal politics of the owner.

In my experience, a member of Congress went so far as to have editorials from my newspapers inserted into the *Congressional Record* as evidence of public opinion. Perhaps I should add that the editorials did not endorse that member, mention his name, or in any other way directly serve any partisan political purposes.

There is a long and honored tradition of the importance of local newspaper editorials in the United States. Presidents are supposed to have read the editorials of the Emporia, Kansas, *Gazette* when William Allen White was writing them. If the rest of us have not been quite so influential on the national level, some of us are carefully read for content by all kinds of leaders.

Another kind of reader that should not be overlooked is other editors and editorial writers. I regularly scanned the editorial pages of some two dozen newspapers. When I saw something good, I might pick up some of its ideas, or even pick up a whole editorial as a guest edi-

torial. This would have a kind of multiplier effect in terms of the distribution of ideas. Five percent of the readers of several newspapers could amount to a sizable number.

The chief service that the local newspaper can perform is to interpret national and international news from a local perspective. This is a service that cannot be performed by the great national newspapers simply because they cannot tailor their editorials to every locale. There are plenty of national and international events that have a differential local impact, and the only news organ calling attention to it may be the local newspaper. It can editorialize about what the events will mean for its readers, as distinguished from the rest of the country or from Americans in the abstract.

Finally, the very effort to write editorials on national and international issues may have certain benefits. As a political scientist, Professor Davis probably did not need to make any unaccustomed effort to become informed enough about such issues to be able to write about them. But if ordinary editorial writers did not feel the obligation to become informed because they would be writing about these issues, they might not make that effort. Then we would have so many fewer citizens who were informed, and so many fewer positions articulated. Public debate would be that much more impoverished.

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