

The Environment of Political Science

(The Editor)

Political scientists dwell haplessly in the border marches of human science, suffering from domestic and foreign turmoil. Our external environment seems particularly to be pressing for attention now.

The National Science Foundation has just determined that it will support social science other than Political Science. So we must decide whether to combat this theoretically illogical policy or to turn to Congress or another group for independent recognition. *PROD'S* view is that the policy-science portion of all social sciences may be best sustained in an autonomous position connected to the legislative branch of government. (I, 5, May '58, 42-3).

Opportunities for travel and residence abroad will continue to multiply, tending to disorganize faculties and deprive students at home. Inquiry is needed on the optimal size of Political Science groupings, into the dogma of the "balanced department," and into curricula that produce inter-university barriers by monopolizing students.

Research opportunities will also continue to expand. How can justice be done to teaching? How can we avoid giving over teaching to those who cannot tolerate research? How can inquiry be freed of artificiality by sponsoring groups?

Classrooms will be more crowded. Teaching standards in most schools will deteriorate. More foreign students, under unusual auspices, will become the enervating wards of our universities. Lower standards will add ever more mediocre students to a system which, at least, already is too low in quality. (Even now, departments that attract the better students might correctly brag of their increased ability to bring students in from other schools and departments.) Can the profession really one-up the crap Johnny in school until he has fathered a typical American family?

Legislative investigating committees are not now flowering, and political scientists might examine this weapon's possibilities when its mantle is turned the other way: governmental secrecy snatches the "specimens" from under our "microscopes"; radio and TV need constant testing of their bizarre notions of the public interest; good studies of executive agencies are as rare as whooping cranes.

No cure for the cramp in publishing is in prospect. An idea or monograph should be publishable if it will appeal to 500 responsible persons. But no commercial publisher can use this formula. Most university presses are replicas of the commercial houses. Seeking an outlet for one's writing is so burdensome and time-consuming that the APSA itself should provide an authors' agency for its members.

External professional communications need attention. Intelligent criticism of the other social sciences should occupy more political scientists. Our policy science function would demand this presumptuous effort.

We need more systematic data-gathering, translation facilities and intelligence-sorting machinery. Quick and cheap means of knowing what is going on, and of tuning in to desired activities, are required.

Should all of these environmental problems be solved at the convention of political scientists next week, we would return with a list of internal problems in the next number of *PROD*.