

CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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TO: COSSA Members, Affiliates, Contributors, and Friends

FROM: Roberta Balstad Miller, Executive Director

COSSA LEGISLATIVE REPORT

August 6, 1982

This Week ...

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Help Needed to Preserve Gains in NSF Appropriation

As reported in last week's COSSA Legislative Report, the National Science Foundation budget has been marked up by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies and is scheduled to be marked up by the full Appropriations Committee on August 10. Subcommittee staff expects that the bill will then be debated on the floor of the House on August 16 or 17. The exact date will not be known until August 13.

This bill includes provision for an additional \$9 million to be shared between NSF's social and behavioral science programs and the Directorate for the Science, Technology and International Affairs. Because of the current budget cutting proclivities in the administration and in the Congress, it is highly likely that there will be an attempt to reduce the NSF budget to the original request level and to do away with the additional \$9 million. To prevent this from happening, social and behavioral scientists should telephone their Congressmen next week asking them to support the \$9 million added to NSF for social and behavioral science research. COSSA will send more explicit information on this issue next week.

NIMH Proposals Down 80%

The number of proposals in the social and behavioral sciences that are reviewed by NIMH's Office of Extramural Project Review is down 80% from 1980. The sharp decline means that social and behavioral science proposals now comprise only 5% of the total number of projects reviewed by NIMH, down from 18% two years ago.

Despite the general phasing out of "social research" at NIMH, funds are still available for social science research. A continued low rate of proposal submissions, however, will only fuel administration efforts to eliminate federal funding for research in the social and behavioral sciences. Researchers are urged to continue to submit proposals to NIMH, emphasizing, as the agency requires, how that research is related to mental health.

Congress Votes Funds for Adolescent Family Life Act

A supplemental appropriations bill recently approved by both the House and Senate includes initial funding of \$10.3 million for the Adolescent Family Life Act of 1981. The President is expected to approve this bill. The funds will allow the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs to begin funding studies of teenage sexuality under the terms of the new federal program in this area. The Adolescent Family Life Act (Title XX of the Public Health Service Act) is authorized to spend up to \$30 million annually.

References to adolescent promiscuity in the bill's original language, since deleted, led to reports that the legislation would establish "chastity centers." However, the negative publicity surrounding the bill on this and other issues have overshadowed reports of its positive features such as support for research.

The legislation, originally introduced by Sen. Jeremiah Denton and supported by Sen. Edward Kennedy, funds programs that provide comprehensive care to pregnant adolescents. Of particular interest to the research community, it stipulates that approximately one-third of its funds be set aside for the support of research, evaluation and dissemination. For example, research grants or contracts can be awarded for "increasing knowledge and awareness of the causes and consequences of teenage sex and pregnancy." In addition, recipients of grants that provide services to pregnant teenagers are required to conduct evaluation of their programs, using technical assistance from local universities or the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs.

More Funds for NIMH

NIMH will receive additional funds for fiscal year 1982 through a supplemental appropriations bill that would give an additional \$10 million to ADAMHA. The supplemental appropriation is intended to provide funds for new research grants in each of ADAMHA's three institutes -- Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Drug Abuse; and Mental Health.

NEH Update

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) may not have a formal appropriation before the 1983 fiscal year begins in October. The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies, under the chairmanship of Representative Sid Yates (D-IL), was scheduled to mark up the appropriation for NEH on July 20 but has postponed action on this bill until mid-August. Because the Senate cannot act on appropriations legislation until the House has completed its deliberations, the Congress may have to enact a temporary funding bill (continuing resolution). Should this occur, it is likely that funding for NEH in 1983 will be kept at 1982 levels until a permanent appropriation is approved.

The National Council on the Humanities met in Washington on July 29 & 30. At the meeting, William Bennett, the Endowment's Chairman, asked the Council to discuss how to distinguish between the social sciences and the humanities. He raised the question in regard to a number of grant applications whose subject matter straddled the humanities and the social sciences. It was decided that the Assistant NEH Chairman, John Agresto, would prepare a short report on the relationship between the humanities and the social sciences for the next meeting of the Council.

ICA Budget Mark-Up

The appropriation for the International Communications Agency (ICA), which is part of the appropriation for State, Justice, Commerce, and the Judiciary, was marked up on July 28. At that time, the Subcommittee approved an ICA appropriation of \$538 million, roughly \$102 million under the administration's request for ICA of \$640 million. According to Becky Ownes of the American Council in Education, reductions were made in the "acquisition and construction of radio facilities" and in salaries and expenses, but not in the Educational and Cultural Affairs Directorate (ECA) where the Fulbright programs are housed. Although the report for the Appropriation has not been released, it is expected that ECA will receive \$100.6 million for FY 1983, as requested by the administration. A full Appropriations Committee mark up has been tentatively scheduled for August 10.

Summer Reading

Enclosed is a recent Washington Post article by Jonathan Yardley that addresses the question of the presentation of scholarly research to a general audience. Although the article specifically deals with historical research, the general issue, if overstated, is one that may apply in many disciplines. See attachment 1.

Attachment 2, from Science, discusses the recent Academy report Behavioral and Social Science Research: A National Resource.

House Passes Job Training Bill to Replace CETA

On Wednesday, August 4, the House of Representatives passed new job training legislation (H.R. 5320) intended to replace the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). The Senate passed its own version of this bill (S. 2036) on July 1. The next step is for Senate and House conferees to meet on the legislation; this will probably take place in early September.

The House legislation clearly provides stronger support for research than the Senate legislation. The research provisions of H.R. 5320, Sections 442 and 452, are available from COSSA. COSSA will attempt to obtain support for the House research provisions in the conference on this legislation. For further information, contact the COSSA office (202/234-5703).

Monday, August 2, 1982

THE WASHINGTON POST

The Decline of History As a Literary Art

By Jonathan Yardley

Writing in the current issue of *The New York Review of Books*, Gordon S. Wood of Brown University presents a penetrating analysis of the prevailing trend among professional historians away from narrative, or storytelling, and toward

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"monographic history," which Wood defines as "technical, specialized analyses of particular events or problems in the past." In a paragraph that contains broader implications, Wood observes:

"The results of all this for history have been little short of chaotic. The technical monographs pour from the presses in overwhelming numbers—books, articles, newsletters, research reports, working papers by the thousands. Historians are more and more specialized, experts on single decades or single subjects, and still they can-

not keep up with the profusion of monographs. Most now make no pretense of writing for the educated public. They write for each other, and with all their scientific paraphernalia—the computer printouts, Guttman scales, Lorenz curves, and Pearson correlation coefficients—they can sometimes count their readers on their hands . . ."

Wood's words bear attention here less because of what they say about the current controversy among historians than because they provide a succinct and pointed illustration of a larger problem. The fascination among historians with the minutiae of the past, and their concomitant rejection of the "educated public" as a readership to be actively sought, are symptomatic of the times. In the age of specialization, the so-called "general reader" is not merely neglected, but is held in contempt; the specialist—whether historian or scientist or computer technician—does not want anything to do with anyone save those who speak the same arcane jargon that he does.

It's obvious that the general reader is left out as a result of this new form of intellectual and/or technological exclusivity. What may be less obvious is that along with those who are left outside are others who are trapped inside. This was brought home to me quite forcibly last week during a conversation with a friend,

See *PREJUDICES*, C10, Col. 3

The Narrow World of Historians

PREJUDICES, *From C1*

a scholar and writer of indisputable range and accomplishment. We met to discuss his work in progress, a book on an abstract but enormously interesting subject—a book that has the potential to reach a substantial audience and to have considerable influence. My friend is a tenured professor at a distinguished university and is thoroughly experienced in the politics of academia, but he would like to break the rules and go for a wider audience; the problem is how to do so without alienating what is, by professional necessity, his basic readership.

In point of fact, he is caught somewhere between the devil and the deep blue sea, damned if he does and damned if he doesn't. To my comment that a section of the book I'd read is brilliant but excessively difficult for the general reader, he replied that what had given me trouble is included in the manuscript in substantial measure because it is expected of him by his academic colleagues. To maintain professional standing—which of course is every bit as important to a scholar as it is to a lawyer or a physician or even a journalist—he has to speak in the language of the profession; but in doing so he almost immediately excludes the larger audience he seeks.

If he writes a book that meets professional expectations as he perceives them, its fate is almost certain. Within the relatively small world of his scholarly specialty, it will be a major event: reviewed exhaustively in the professional journals, discussed at seminars, debated in scholarly papers. Outside that world, it will be reviewed in the major newspapers and general-circulation magazines, but probably in reviews that summarize the book's ideas and arguments—reviews that tell ordinary readers as much as they are likely to want to know about the book and that are therefore not "selling" reviews. The audience of serious but unspecialized readers will be lost to him.

If, on the other hand, he decides to make his

pitch directly to the general reader, his fate is equally certain. He strips his abstract arguments down to their barest and clearest bones, adds anecdotes to lighten the book's tone and imposes a narrative structure in order to give it internal movement—with the result that the book is taken by a club, sells well in the stores, and gets him onto a couple of talk shows. The price he will pay for this success is criticism, perhaps vilification, by his peers. He will be accused of "selling out," of "popularizing," of cheapening his professional standards in order to make a quick buck. He will be lumped with Barbara Tuchman and John Kenneth Galbraith and Carl Sagan, and others whose great offense is that they treat serious subjects in ways accessible to a large audience and that as a result—horrors!—they gain money and fame from their books.

The pressures on the writer caught in this situation are enormous, and the greatest pressures are those that come from his colleagues and/or peers. There is absolutely no guarantee that if he writes for a popular audience he will get one; the odds, in fact, are strongly against him no matter how skillfully he performs the task. But there is similarly no doubt that if he writes for a popular audience he will be subjected to professional scorn. The world of his colleagues is the world he must live in once the book is over and done with, not the world of talk shows and newspaper interviews. If he chooses the certainty of respect within a small world over the slender chance of success within a larger one, who is to blame him?

And if he makes that choice, he is far less the loser than is our culture. The specialist who chooses to stay within the secure confines of his discipline may not get on Johnny Carson's television program, but he can lead a comfortable and rewarding life. His ideas, though, are lost to the world beyond, save as they are filtered through the work of journalists and other "popularizers." Quite simply, this writer and his largest potential audience may never make direct connections; whenever this happens, and whatever the reason, it is always a pity.

Academy Boosts Social Sciences

It would seem strange that in a complex, information-based society such as the United States there would be any doubt about the value and utility of the social sciences. But, given the Reagan Administration's attempts to slash spending on social science research, it may be appropriate that the National Academy of Sciences has produced a report* that roundly endorses the social and behavioral sciences.

The Committee on Basic Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, chaired by Robert McCormick Adams of the University of Chicago, after 2 years of work, has come up with a very general product. But its survey of the development of such fields as sample surveys, standardized testing, child development, and voting behavior make it clear that the work of social science has become inextricably woven into the business of government and industry.

The social and behavioral sciences have been the object of two mutually contradictory types of criticism. One is that they document the trivial and obvious—the kind of knowledge that common sense can easily supply. The other is that, since the subject is human behavior, the social sciences are dangerously susceptible to being employed for harmful social manipulation.

As Kenneth Prewitt of the Social Science Research Council explained to *Science*, the latter criticism fails to distinguish between social science and the political process. After all, Prewitt pointed out, China and the U.S.S.R. have highly manipulative governments and very little social science research. He might have added that if knowledge is power, knowledge from the physical sciences has probably contributed far more than has social knowledge in enabling evil leaders to manipulate their subjects.

As for the first criticism, Prewitt argued that the tools of social science can be seen as an extension of common sense, just as the tools of natural science extend the five senses. Moreover, "common sense" is not a fixed perception but constantly changes with new knowledge. Many past findings from the social sciences, now occupying the realm of common knowledge, were counterintuitive when first documented. For example, he said, common sense might have predicted that social disruption and upheaval would lead to panic and the disintegration of society. But, in fact, studies of the impact of carpet bombing during World War II showed that such disruption leads to a high degree of social bonding. Another example Prewitt gave was education, which some have argued is a tool for perpetuating the status quo. But social science has shown that education is indeed a democratizing influence by facilitating social mobility.

The report is aimed at dispelling the persistent notion that social sciences are not really science. Academy president Frank Press said, that on the contrary, "social sciences follow the scientific method and even understand it better perhaps than the physical sciences do." That is because there is a large degree of randomness in outcomes and careless methodology can render studies useless.

It is difficult to put together a punchy report on the social and behavioral sciences because their influences are felt over a long term and often indirectly. The modern American vocabulary now contains hundreds of terms generated by the social sciences—such as "quality of life," "unemployment," "alienation," "stagflation," which represent concepts that are now embedded in the public consciousness. As the report puts it, the way policy-makers often use social science research "is not deliberate, direct, and targeted, but a result of long-term percolation of social science concepts, theories, and findings into the climate of informed opinion. . . ."

The committee's report is not a document designed to supply defenders of social science with snappy anecdotes to counter attention-getting criticism such as that emanating from Senator William Proxmire (D-Wisc.), author of the famed Golden Fleece Award. Rather, explains Prewitt, it is more likely to have a trickle-down effect by reinforcing the confidence of investigators themselves in the worthiness of their enterprise.—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

**Behavioral and Social Science Research: A National Resource* (National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1982).