

inordinate amount of time, were entirely useless, that none of them, for example, had ever been reported in the national press.

When it became apparent that I could not administer a large department at New York University and manage the affairs of a growing American Sociological Society at the same time, I resigned as Executive Officer. By then, plans were well advanced for the move to Washington and so a new and, I may say, a much more active executive office came into being. In 1980 the office, and the Association itself, bear only a small resemblance to what they were twenty years ago. Then there were no sections, no funds for awards, only one journal to produce, no caucuses at the annual meetings, no luncheon roundtables, no didactic seminars, no child care, no paper sales, no committee on professional ethics, no committee on freedom of research and teaching, and no minority fellowship program. These are only some of the current activities that did not exist in 1960–1962.

Growth brings its own rewards. At the same time it often exhibits the defects of its virtues. As a veteran attender of annual meetings—since the mid-thirties no less—I think that they are now too long. Five days of continuous meetings exhaust both body and wallet. I fully understand—as who could not?—the pressure upon the younger members of the Association to appear on its programs and to gain thereby some national visibility, not to say an item on a vita. In addition, only those whose papers have

been accepted for the program normally qualify for travel expenses from their colleges and universities. Session organizers thus are under pressure to accept almost every paper submitted, with little regard for merit. (I once rejected a paper whose author threatened suicide if I did not change my mind.) In recent years I have heard, in fact, several disgraceful papers, obviously written not as contributions to sociological knowledge but only to win a free trip to the meetings.

Finally, increase in size has resulted in some loss of collegiality. The warmth and recognition still characteristic of the regional societies is no longer so evident in the national. Because of increasing cost, and in spite of paid travel expenses, the annual meetings now tend also to be regional in their attendance. That is, meetings in San Francisco for the most part draw a different clientele than those in New York and Boston. I should not wish to exaggerate this phenomenon—and it is obviously not true for those who serve on the Association's committees—but there is no doubt in my mind that it exists.

In spite of changing times and circumstances, however, the American Sociological Association continues to play a large and important—indeed indispensable—role in the lives of its members. I am proud to have been able to serve it in a number of official capacities, not least that of one of its executive officers, and I know that it will continue to thrive whatever vicissitudes of fortune may be waiting in the future.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HALF CENTURY OF LIFE IN THE ASA*

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PRESIDENT, 1961

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Early on a fine Saturday afternoon in October, around 1923 or 1924, the phone

rang. I, a high school boy, answered. A voice said: "This is Professor Small. Would you like a ticket to the football game?" I had never seen a college football game, although Stagg Field was only two

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blocks away. I ran all the way to Albion Small's house and pushed the doorbell. A weary looking bearded old man opened the door and handed me a ticket. With about two words of thanks I resumed my run—to the stadium. An usher glanced at my ticket and showed me to the special box for the president and other dignitaries (Small was Dean of the Graduate School as well as Head Professor of Sociology).

This was my one contact with the man who in 1892 founded, and for three decades led, the Chicago department. I have always felt that for me it was at least a symbolic contact with the beginnings of established academic sociology.

While still young I also came across several other early presidents of the Association. I heard George E. Vincent, possibly the most eloquent of all American sociologists, speak at an annual banquet. I spoke once with James Q. Dealey, who preceded me at Brown University by a few years. I had several conversations, and once dined, with the gigantic and fascinating E. A. Ross (who mostly talked about himself). I also felt honored to shake hands with Charles H. Cooley, in his last year of life. From then on I had at least some contact with all but two of the next 50 ASA presidents, several having been fellow students at Chicago and many others coming to be close personal friends.

My first course in sociology was in 1925, and after that I had, in all, six years of concentration in the subject, all at the University of Chicago, ending with the doctorate in 1931. I then found a teaching position hundreds of miles away, in a university that was barely aware of Chicago sociology and little interested in the subject, and perhaps would have dropped it from the curriculum if it were not that Lester Ward once taught it there.

Though I joined our Association in 1932, I attended two meetings before that, and so can properly claim a half century of participation in the organization. It has been a rich and interesting experience all the way, involving attendance at nearly all the annual meetings, as well as three years of editorship of the *ASR*, membership on the Council for 11 years, and holding of the two top offices. There are too many

memories to be told in this short paper; I will offer only a few samples.

The selection of presidents has evolved over the years from the simple way of the earliest years, when men like Ward, Sumner, Small, and Ross were so prominent that they could scarcely be opposed. In those years and for some time after, the office sought the man and there was no plotting or politicking. The president's duties were mainly to plan an annual meeting and preside over business and Council meetings.

The tradition was broken in the mid-1920s when, to rehabilitate W. I. Thomas who was virtually banned from academic life, his name was put up for the presidency. There was some opposition but Thomas was elected. Then in the following couple of decades or more, if there was any political maneuvering in the selection of presidents it was invisible or nearly so. In most cases the candidates did not lift a finger to attain the honor, until the events of 1976 when there was open campaigning on behalf of A. M. Lee, Jr., who was elected and at once attempted to achieve important changes in the ASA constitution—changes which were quickly rejected by a strong majority of voters.

Over the years, as the decisions of the ASA increased in importance and complexity, the power of the president was necessarily reduced and that of the elected Council increased. Some presidents came into office with little previous knowledge of how the organization could be governed and thus were unprepared to make important decisions. Such was the case, for example, with P. A. Sorokin, who was not even a member of the Association at the time he was nominated. It also was true of Florian Znaniecki, who was well into his declining years when he took office. At his first Council meeting he took the chair, but at once became so confused that he was unable to function. John Riley, then the Secretary, with impressive diplomatic skill turned to him and asked, "Professor Znaniecki, would you like to have me take over for you?" The answer was a grateful yes, and so the business was able to proceed.

Another amusing presidential fumble

occurred in a Council meeting of 1961. Toward the end of each annual meeting the newly elected Council holds a brief session. As retiring president, I turned over the chair to Paul Lazarsfeld, the new president. Without preliminaries he began to outline a major and complex plan for reorganization of the Association, and at the end, still sitting in the chair, moved its adoption, seemingly unaware that there was a constitution. For a moment the Council seemed to be stunned, then one member jumped to his feet and shouted in protest, followed by some sharp objections by other members. Lazarsfeld yielded at once, and dropped the subject. After adjournment, I mentioned to him that the constitution required that the Council follow Robert's *Rules of Order*. He was surprised, and said that he had heard of that, but thought it was just an expression, and not real. The next day I presented him with a copy, gift-wrapped in gold paper, and soon afterward received a grateful note of thanks.

Unfamiliarity with rules of order led to another incident at a general business session some time in the late 1950s. A member had given notice that he wanted to offer a resolution, and had shown the text to some of the officials, who found the sense acceptable, but the writing prolix and unclear. They helped him write a revision, which the member accepted. At the business meeting the resolution was taken up and passed without discussion. Then, when there seemed to be no further business, Robin Williams, the president, asked if there were a motion to adjourn. After a few moments of silence, the member, staying seated, called out "Question!" The question was put and carried, and the meeting adjourned. The member then jumped to his feet and said, "I wanted to ask a *question*." It was too late; the audience had scattered. But a day or two later the *New York Times* carried a story to the effect that the officials of the ASA had blatantly suppressed dissent in the business meeting. The reporter was found and the situation explained, but she refused to accept the correction, saying that she was a trained journalist and knew what she saw. This time I did not present a copy of Robert's *Rules*.

Still another minor problem about the ASA presidency arose from the fact that not everyone can be elected to that position. Disappointment became visible when some hopeful presidents of regional societies failed to attain the ASA office, overlooking the fact that each year there are a number of new regional society presidents, and only one ASA president. The dissatisfaction occasionally turned into a regional sensitivity, with regionals imagining that more powerful groups were discriminating against them. At one time there was a suspicion that the east and west coast associations were gaining more than their share of presidencies, and there was particular sentiment against the Pacific Sociological Association because of the large geographical territory from which it drew members—extending as it does from Vancouver, B.C., to San Diego and from Honolulu to Salt Lake City, and even beyond. Protesting members of mid-western organizations even submitted a proposal that the ASA define the territorial limits for each regional association, overlooking the obvious fact that these latter are completely independent organizations.

There were other interesting ways in which intensity of feeling showed itself in irrational ways, showing how human good scholars can be.

During my editorship of the *ASR* the president of SSSP sent in a proposed constitution for that organization, requesting that it be published in the *ASR*. Since the *Review* never had a policy of printing constitutions of other societies (or even that of the ASA!), the paper was returned. My reward was a denunciation in a Council meeting and a further drubbing in a letter to the president of ASA, with copies to various other leading sociologists.

Even more absurd was a request from P. A. Sorokin, who demanded that I publish a statement accusing Talcott Parsons of plagiarism from Sorokin's works. This was not the product of a reasonable mind; his principal argument was that Parsons had based a theory on the three elements of *society, culture, and personality*—an idea that was clearly in the public domain. On receiving a rejection, Sorokin responded with an angry letter, threatening

to publish the statement elsewhere and to add that it had been refused by me, Editor of *ASR*. I terminated the correspondence by writing that if he did, he should add that the Editor had submitted the statement to every associate editor and that each one had recommended against printing it. I never learned if he attempted to publish it elsewhere.

Sometimes scholarly rivalry corrupts reason. New directions of research interest have so distressed some sociologists that they look for means of obstructing them. On one such occasion a veteran of the ASA was asked how this could be accomplished. The old man smiled and simply quoted his favorite Biblical sage, Gamaliel, who had been asked a similar question. He answered, "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it . . ." (Acts 6:38-39).

Such incidents as the above are, of

course, trivial in comparison with the achievement of workers in sociology. Over the years we have steadily gained in knowledge and in the respect by other scientists and by the general public. Our old-timers remember serving at the bottom of the prestige scale in universities, and enduring scoffs from members of other disciplines, as well as being asked by strangers such questions as "Sociology, what's that? Socialism?" One measure of our progress is the listing of sociologists in the *World Who's Who In Science*, and others are the recognition of the discipline by the National Science Foundation and by the National Academy of Sciences. It would seem that if sociologists and their national organization, ASA, hold to the course that has been so rewarding up to the present, always trying to steer clear of domination by doctrine while encouraging the development and use of objective methods along with rational theory, this success could flourish.

THE ASA IN 1961-1962: BRINGING IN MANAGERIAL SKILLS*

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The first Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association was Professor Mitilda White Riley who served with professional dedication and a sensitivity to the changing needs of its members from 1949 through 1960. These were formative years in shaping the organizational structure of the Association and in responding to the bewildering array of new services required by its rapidly growing membership. Dr. Riley, almost working as a committee of one, was responsible for the astonishing increase in

the membership of the Association over those years.

When Professor Riley elected to relinquish her post in 1960, it was filled on an interim basis by Professor Robert Bierstedt of New York University. At that time, the NYU Washington Square campus served as the administrative headquarters for the Association. He served the Society with devotion from late 1960 through August 1961. During his tenure the Council of the Association designated as his Administrative Officer a fellow sociologist at New York University, Professor Janice H. Hopper.

Sometime during the Summer and Fall of 1961, I had a number of conversations with members of a Search Committee in-

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