

# PRESIDENCY RESEARCH



Editor: Michael Nelson  
Editorial Assistant: Stephen L. Robertson

Vol. VII, No. 1

Fall 1984

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PRESIDENCY RESEARCH GROUP

President: George Edwards, Texas A & M  
Vice President: John Kessel, Ohio State  
Secretary-Treasurer: Michael Grossman, Towson State  
Program Director: Paul Light, National Academy of  
Public Administration  
Editor: Michael Nelson, Vanderbilt

## CONTENTS

News and Notes	2
Providing Practical Advice to Presidents Paul C. Light	7
A National Presidency Primary Proposal Martin P. Wattenberg	12
Rethinking Presidential History Stephen Skowronek	17
Three Questions About Presidents Paul J. Quirk	24
Recent Publications on the Presidency	30

## SPRING 1985 ISSUE

Watch for Part I of our year-long retrospective on Richard Neustadt's Presidential Power, which was published 25 years ago. Articles by Neustadt, Stephen Wayne, Michael Nelson, and James Pfiffner.

News, notes, and bibliographical entries are welcome, along with article suggestions for the Fall 1985 issue.

NEWS AND NOTES

Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues,

I am very honored to serve as your president in 1984-85 and am pleased to report that the Presidency Research Group is in the process of significant and positive change. I am indebted to my predecessor, Frank Rourke, for guiding us so well last year.

Our most important step has been to petition the council of the APSA for recognition as an affiliated section, the Organized Section on Presidency Research. Despite the slight name change, our fundamental purpose remains the same: to further research on the presidency and other political executives. We expect to receive a favorable vote at the council meeting in the spring.

Aside from the advantages APSA affiliation will bring us in collecting dues and increasing membership, it will also provide panels on the presidency and other executives higher priority and greater prominence. After experiencing a somewhat uneven reception for these panels in the past, I am sure we can all appreciate the advantages presidency research will now enjoy. In addition, we will have more say on APSA organizational matters.

A natural question that arises from our affiliation regards PRG members who are not members of the APSA. First, the APSA has established a special dues structure, which we recommend, for those wishing to join but who are not professional political scientists. If this is not appealing to PRG members, however, we will have a separate list of those who wish to join the PRG but not the APSA and still receive the newsletter. Those interested in this option should contact our secretary-treasurer, Michael Grossman,

at Towson State University, Towson, Maryland 21204.

Another departure for our organization is the establishment of a committee for the Neustadt Award for the best book on the presidency published in 1984. The chair is Tom Cronin at Colorado College, and he welcomes nominations for the award. The other committee members are James MacGregor Burns (Williams College) and Martha Kumar (Towson State University).

This year our program chair is Paul Light of the National Academy of Public Administration. Larry Berman of the University of California-Davis is heading the APSA section on executives. They will be coordinating their efforts and are looking for suggestions for stimulating panels. Cal MacKenzie deserves our special thanks for organizing an excellent set of panels at the recent APSA meeting in Washington.

We welcome your suggestions and ideas. Although we have come a long way in the past five years, we are always open to improving what we do and providing new services. Ultimately, we rely on the talent and creativity in our membership, and we are eager to work together on our common interests.

George C. Edwards III  
Professor, Texas A&M University

#### Minutes of the Annual Meeting

(Francis Rourke, President, presiding: August 30, 1984)

Michael Grossman, the secretary-treasurer, reported that as of this date the PRG has 202 paying members, including 174 individuals and 28 institutions. Payment of dues came in two forms, as some members paid the new dues of \$7.00 for 2 years and others the old annual amount of \$3.00. Our surplus

has risen from \$399.81 to \$1062.18.

George Edwards, the incoming president, reported the recommendations of the nominating committee for the officers for the coming year. The nominations committee appointed by Francis Rourke included: George Edwards, Stephen Wayne, William Lammers. Their recommendations for officers for the 1984-85 year were: John Kessel, vice president; Michael Grossman, secretary-treasurer; Michael Nelson, newsletter editor; Paul Light, program director. The recommendations for the steering committee were: Betty Glad, Calvin MacKenzie, Joseph Pika, Nelson Polsby, Jack Wann, Richard Watson. The committee's recommendations were unanimously accepted.

Rourke raised the issue of whether the Presidency Research Group should become an organized section of APSA. Edwards suggested that collecting dues would be easier if we joined the association and additionally, we would be assured of good accommodations for panels at the annual meetings. Tom Mann, Executive Director of the APSA, stated that the PRG will continue to get meeting rooms at the annual convention whether or not we affiliate. He explained that for the dues fee of \$3.00 the APSA provides administrative help with the newsletter and membership lists. A possible sticking point is that APSA rules require that section members also be members of the APSA. Non-political scientists can be associate members of APSA for an annual fee of \$25.00 plus \$3.00 to the the PRG.

Mann described other forms of APSA help. The Legislative Studies Section, for example, received assistance for their television production on Congress. The Association tries to be responsive to sections' interests through regular Washington meetings with section representatives. If we do become a section, there would be a year of transition when we retain our membership list. One section maintained its own list and kept in contact with members who did not join the APSA, but were retained because they were long-term members of their

group. Mann said he does not recommend such a policy.

Pika asked Mann to explain why the legislative and executive parts of APSA program were merged in 1984. Mann said that while it was an idea that was intellectually defensible, it was ill advised. Larry Berman will be heading the executive panels for the New Orleans convention and he will be talking with the PRG program chair, Light. MacKenzie, program chair for the current year, reported that relations with the APSA had been smooth. Anyone who wanted to be on a panel or give a paper was accommodated if their request was received by the end of the previous year.

After the discussion, Wayne moved that the PRG become a section of the APSA. It was seconded and unanimously adopted. In order to become a section formally, we need a petition signed by 100 members.

Edwards then brought up as an additional item of business the PRG's Neustadt Award, established to honor scholarly work on the presidency.

At the time the award was established, it was unclear whether it would be for books only and whether it would be given every year -- it has subsequently been decided that the award did not have to be given each year. Tom Cronin spoke to the APSA Council about having the award made by the APSA but was turned down on the grounds that it would compete with the Woodrow Wilson award. The APSA will, however, announce the award in the Convention Program and PS. There was some discussion about what kind of prize there should be. Edwards noted that few groups give less than \$250.00, but it was not clear that our treasury could support such a prize. Other questions raised were: Should the prize be a plaque or simply a handshake? Who should make the nominations? (Usually book publishers nominate their authors.) The group decided that the only charge that the committee on the Neustadt award (Cronin, James M. Burns, Martha Kumar) would be given is that the prize is to be awarded to a book that represents a "significant contribution

## PROVIDING PRACTICAL ADVICE TO PRESIDENTS

Paul C. Light  
National Academy of Public Administration

There is no doubt that Presidency research continues to prosper. My question is whether anyone else cares. As the director of Academy research at the National Academy of Public Administration, my job is to generate studies that have practical applications for governance, whether for Congress, state and local governments, bureaucrats, or the president. But I am concerned that there is not much room in the presidency subfield for that kind of advice, both because scholars rarely extend their work to the issue of applied recommendations and because presidents rarely listen when they do.

I am one who believes that we ought to help all presidents succeed, regardless of party or ideology. Coming from the University of Michigan, I cannot imagine how voters can make choices on the basis of issues unless presidents are reasonably successful in implementing their policies. If we are to move toward responsible parties or issue voting, we must help presidents govern.

Let us assume for the moment that the presidency subfield has something to say about governance; the the presidency could benefit from what we have to say. After all, most of us invest years in our work, slaving over interviews or documents to learn what we can about the institution, the policies, or the process. Why then don't presidents listen? Let me suggest five answers.

1. Presidents don't understand us. In a world in which a simple cross-tabulation of survey data is considered sophisticated, presidency research is often incomprehensible. As our methodological complexity has grown, our

