The American Political Science Association

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The interests of political science, political economy, and history are so closely related that an attempt wholly to separate them, or to pursue their study as absolutely independent subjects, would be as practically impossible as it would be undesirable. Of the relation between history and political science it has been said by the late Sir John Seeley that politics without history has no root, and that history without politics has no fruit. The connection between economics and politics is, if anything, more intimate. Without the information that the study of economic principles and of economic history affords, the political scientist is unable either to explain many of the processes of political growth or wisely to determine lines of public policy. Upon the other hand, deprived of the knowledge furnished by the scientific study of the mechanism and methods of operation of governments, the economist finds himself insufficiently informed either correctly to analyze past and existing economic conditions or satisfactorily to devise the means by which the truths that he discovers may be made of practical advantage to mankind.

And yet, intimate as are these relationships, the field of political science is one that may be clearly distinguished from that of history as well as from that of economics, and the topics which the field includes, in order to be treated adequately, need to be studied as distinct subjects of inquiry.1 It is true that to a very considerable extent the phenomena dealt with by the historian, the economist and the political scientist respectively are the same, but each examines his material from a different standpoint. The historian has for his especial aim the determination and portrayal of processes and stages of human development. With economic and political interests he is concerned only in so far as it is necessary for him to understand them in order to explain the movements he is studying. So also with the economist. His primary interest is

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1. The establishment of this Quarterly, in 1886, naturally raised the same questions which are here discussed, viz., the interdependence of all the social sciences and the existence of a distinct science of politics. See Munroe Smith, “The Domain of Political Science.” Political Science Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 7.
in the ascertainment of the principles that control the production, exchange and distribution of wealth; and he finds it necessary to enter upon political ground only in so far as government has an influence upon economic conditions, either by reason of its cost, the economic security that it gives, or the manner in which it directly interferes, or may directly interfere, in the regulation of the industrial interests of the people. Thus, since neither the historian nor the economist is primarily interested in the study of matters political, it is necessary, in order that these matters should receive adequate scientific treatment, that they should be studied by those whose special interest in them is upon their political side.

Comprehensively stated, then, political science has to deal with all that directly concerns political society, that is to say, with societies of men effectively organized under a supreme authority for the maintenance of an orderly and progressive existence. Restrictively stated, political science has to deal primarily only with those interests or phenomena that arise because of the existence of political relations.

The definite field thus marked out for the political scientists is divisible into three parts. First, there is the province of political theory or philosophy, the aim of which is the analysis and exact definition of the concepts employed in political thinking, and which thus includes the consideration of the essential nature of the state, its right to be, its ends, its proper functions and its relation to its own citizens, and the nature of law. Secondly, there is the domain of public law, including as its subdivisions constitutional, international and administrative law. Thirdly, there is the general study of government, its different forms, the distribution of its powers, its various organs—legislative, executive and judicial, central and local—and the principles governing its administration. The subdivisions of these larger subjects readily suggest themselves. Furthermore, all these topics, chief and subordinate, of course lend themselves to theoretical, descriptive, comparative or historical treatment, and nearly all involve, or at least lead up to, the discussion of practical problems of government.

The foregoing description of political science is sufficient to indicate not only the propriety, but, in the interest of scientific progress, the necessity of recognizing the study of matters political as an independent discipline. Within recent years this recognition has been increasingly extended in this country, as has been especially shown in the creation in our colleges and universities of departments and chairs of politics as distinct from those of history and economics. Not until December 30, 1903, however, did this recognition lead to the establishment of a political science association whose exclusive interests should be political in character. Upon that date there was established at New Orleans, Louisiana, at the time when the American Historical and American Economic Associations were holding their annual meetings in that city, an association whose title is "The American Political Science Association" and
whose object is, as its constitution declares, "the encouragement of the scientific study of politics, public law, administration and diplomacy."

The need for such an association as this, which should do for political science what the American Economic and American Historical Associations are doing for economics and history respectively, had been felt for a number of years. Direct action leading to its establishment was not taken, however, until December 30, 1902, when, at a meeting called primarily to consider the feasibility of creating a society of comparative legislation, there was suggested and discussed the necessity for a national association that should have for its sphere of interests the entire field of political science. The outcome of this discussion was the appointment of a committee of fifteen representative political scientists which was empowered to enter into communication with such individuals and associations as should be thought likely to be interested, with a view to discovering, if possible, how general was the demand for a new association. As the result of its investigation, this committee found existing, among those primarily interested in the scientific study of matters political, an almost unanimous demand for the establishment of a new national association that should take the scientific lead in all matters of political interest, encouraging research, aiding if possible in the collection and publication of valuable material, and, in general, advancing the scientific study of politics in this country. An opinion, equally general, was found to exist that the new association, if and when established, should maintain the closest and most harmonious relations possible with the American Historical and American Economic Associations, and, whenever possible, hold its annual meetings at the same times and places with them. Such a cooperation, it was declared, would be beneficial to the two older bodies and vital to the new one.

Upon these facts being presented at a meeting of those interested, in the Tilton Memorial Library of Tulane University, December 30, 1903, there was established, as has been said, the American Political Science Association. As its first president was elected Dr. Frank J. Goodnow, professor of administrative law in Columbia University. As vice-presidents were elected President Woodrow Wilson, Professor Paul S. Reinsch of the University of Wisconsin, and Hon. Simeon E. Baldwin of New Haven. Professor W. W. Willoughby of Johns Hopkins University was elected as the secretary and treasurer. Associated with these officers in the government of the association there were elected

2. The composition of this committee was as follows: J. W. Jenks (Chairman), Cornell University; Simeon E. Baldwin, New Haven, Conn.; E. Dana Durand, Washington, D.C.; J. H. Finley, New York City; W. W. Howe, New Orleans; H. P. Judson, University of Chicago; M. A. Knapp, Washington, D.C.; C. W. Needham, Columbia University; P. S. Reinsch, University of Wisconsin; L. S. Rowe, University of Pennsylvania; F. J. Stimson, Boston; Josiah Strong, New York City; R. H. Whitten, Albany, N.Y.; Max West, San Juan, Puerto Rico; W. W. Willoughby, Johns Hopkins University.

3. Declined.
the following members of an executive council: Andrew D. White, ex-ambassador to Germany; Jesse Macy, professor of political science, Iowa College; H. P. Judson, professor of political science, University of Chicago; L. S. Rowe, professor of political science, University of Pennsylvania; Albert Shaw, editor of the Review of Reviews; Bernard Moses, professor of political science, University of California; J. A. Fairlie, professor of administrative law, University of Michigan; W. A. Schaper, professor of political science, University of Minnesota; C. H. Huberich, professor of political science, University of Texas; and Herbert Putnam, librarian of Congress.4

In order effectively to cover the whole field of political science, the association expects to distribute its work among sections, each of which will devote its especial attention, respectively, to international law and diplomacy, comparative legislation, historical and comparative jurisprudence, constitutional law, administration, politics and political theory.

The association, as such, according to a provision of its constitution, will not assume a partisan position upon any question of practical politics. This means, of course, that, though at its annual meetings and in its publications it will give the freest opportunity possible for the discussion of current questions of political interest, it will not, as an association, by a resolution or otherwise, commit itself or commit its members to any position thereupon.

Any person may, upon application to the secretary, become a member of the association. The annual dues are three dollars. By the payment of fifty dollars one may become a life member, exempt from annual dues.

By those who have been most active in its establishment, it is declared that this new association is intended and expected to attract the support not only of those engaged in academic instruction, but of public administrators, lawyers of broader culture, and, in general, of all those interested in the scientific study of the great and increasingly important questions of practical and theoretical politics. Affiliated with the American Historical and the American Economic Associations, it is asserted that a trinity of societies has been created that will be able to assume and maintain a leadership in these allied fields of thought that can be subject to no dispute. It is believed that, just as the establishment of the two older of these bodies marked the beginning of a new period in the scientific study in America of the subjects with which they are concerned, so the creation of the American Political Science Association will, in years to come, be looked back upon as at once indicating the definite recognition of the fact that political science is a department of knowledge distinct from that of the other so-called social sciences, and as marking the commencement of a new period in the scientific study and teaching of matters political in the United States.

4. Declined.