



FROM THE PRESIDENT

REFUSE TO CHOOSE!

Ira Katznelson
New School for Social Research

When Lord Bryce addressed a joint meeting of the American Political Science Association and the American Historical Association in 1908, he took as his topic "The Relations of Political Science to History and to Practice." The fledgling discipline, he wrote, "stands midway between history and politics, between the past and the present."¹ Our still young Section can lay claim to this legacy. As a collegium of scholars, we have acted to promote legitimate work at this junction, with considerable success. In the brief hortatory remarks I get to make as president, I should like to caution against self congratulations. Here, more specifically, I want to take note of two recent articles by non-troglodyte sociologists, John Goldthorpe and Andrew Abbott,² who raise sharp questions about the ties being forged between their discipline and history - issues of evidence, methodology, and causality - that are germane to our work as political scientists. Then, by way of a return to Bryce, I explain why, in spite of taking their criticisms seriously, I think we should reject them.

For Goldthorpe, the central problem of historical sociology is its reliance on the limited kinds of evidence available to historians who analyze the necessarily partial relics left to us from the past. With their reliance on secondary works, historical sociologists, he claims, use this evidentiary base in an especially credulous way. By contrast, he argues, more present-oriented social scientists can exercise tight control over the evidence they craft in surveys, through fieldwork, and by other approaches. He thus celebrates sociology at the expense of history. [Continued p.2]

COMMENTARY

CELEBRATORS OF THE STATUS QUO: REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY OF POLITICS IN THE 1990s

Robert Putnam
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I've been asked to reflect on history, politics, and the ways we study them. For a tough job like this, I turn to my mother-in-law test for political science: "What good is it? How does it help me understand what is happening and what we can do about it?" Today, our discipline offers entirely different kinds of answers than it did in its early years at the start of the century — although the present political epoch poses political questions that are strikingly similar to those faced at the start of the Progressive era.

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ON THE STUDY OF RACE AND POLITICS

A century ago, Democrats regained control of both the White House and Congress for the first time in 36 years, since the Buchanan Administration of 1857-1861. The Cleveland administration promptly moved to roll back the several statutes enacted during Reconstruction to implement the Fifteenth Amendment. They did this in the 53rd and 54th Congresses, 1893-94.

The Repealer made it considerably easier for Southern conservatives to engineer a massive transformation of the Southern electoral system. New rules -- literacy tests, grandfather clauses, good understanding tests, poll taxes, and the like -- drove black Southerners out of electoral politics. Many white Southerners were also unable to meet the new costs of voting. Since then, of course, American politics has undergone a major democratic transformation, sparked by the civil rights movement and the rise of other, new forms of African-American politics and struggle. We are well into what C. Vann Woodward

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I'll present you with several, major questions that are facing researchers in our area. Much more theoretical and empirical work is needed to determine how the increasingly complex patterns of race, gender and class are influencing micro-level political decision-making, the organization of politics in several different kinds of communities, and ideological debates within communities, between communities and the nation as a whole. How does political, economic, and social information flow into oppressed communities? To what degree are indigenous information sources important, alternative media? How are cues processed and ranked from national elites to oppressed communities, community organizations and grassroots organizations? If we had answers to these questions we would have not only a more representative social science but also a much more accurate social science, able to capture much more of American political reality than we currently do.

HANES WALTON
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It's time for political scientists to think hard about how and why the concepts and the methodologies informing race relations research don't seem to capture and to appreciate fully the impact of factors that seem obviously important. What I have in mind here, for instance, is the puzzle of research which reports that race was not a factor in Tom Bradley's defeat to become elected Governor of California, or research which reports that the events at Howard Beach and Bensonhurst had no impact - at least any impact that can be detected through behavioral methodologies -- on the outcome of the mayoral race which elected David Dinkins mayor of New York City. We need to be as thoughtful as possible in evaluating such findings as these, and perhaps develop more appropriate techniques and approaches for understanding the often elusive ways in which race shapes politics.

ERIC FONER
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A great unexamined area in the history of Afro-American politics is the nature of political activity in the post-Reconstruction era, from 1877 to disenfranchisement. We know something about black Congressmen and patronage holders, but almost nothing about black participation in the Readjuster, Populist, and other such movements, as well as the daily workings of Republican party politics at the local level. What kind of leaders emerged after Reconstruction, how did they operate in the changed political climate? Perhaps work-in-progress on the period by Steven Hahn and Leon Litwack will help to answer these questions.

BERNARD GROFMAN
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CHANDLER DAVIDSON
RICE UNIVERSITY

In our opinion, there are four "generations of basic questions," so to speak, concerning African-American voting rights. By that we mean the underlying questions that have concerned researchers over time. Related to these questions are more specialized issues which are quite important in their own right and which we can now begin thinking seriously about because we know as much as we do about some of the basic questions.

The first, basic question that was asked, and that has been answered, is: what are the consequences of changes in the rules of the American electoral game for African-American exercise of the franchise? The second, basic question, also largely answered, has been: what are the consequences of rules changes for African-American descriptive representation, that is, for the number of Black Elected Officials?

The third, basic question, one that has only recently been asked, is: What is the extent to which minority elected officials now function as non-discriminated part of the political process? We have a lot of single-city studies, but we need an experimental design to understand the consequences in hundreds of jurisdictions of shifts from at-

has termed a Second Reconstruction. Loopholes in the Repealer probably facilitated, in small part, federal response to the civil rights movement.

Today, the Repealer, loopholes and all, is largely forgotten. On these pages we mark its centennial by asking some of our colleagues to comment on other, overlooked issues and works in the study of civil and voting rights.

We thank those listed in these pages for responding to our inquiry. We hope that their comments will play a useful, agenda

setting role, both in our section and in the profession as a whole. And we invite our readers to join the conversation -- if you have brief additions, send them to us and we'll run them in a future issue.

R.V.
J.M.

large to district-based elections. One good cut at this issue was *Protest Is Not Enough*, by Rufus Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David Tabb, (The University of California Press, 1984). But this study ends fairly early after what we call the "political incorporation" of the late 1960s and early 1970s. We need to do more of the kind of work done in James Button's *Blacks and Social Change* (Princeton University Press, 1989) which extends the analysis of political incorporation up to 1985. We need to know a lot more about the long-run effects of political incorporation. Finally, the fourth, basic

question is almost a complete unknown:

how much has the revolution in voting rights mattered to the life chances of minorities? There are conflicting arguments and assertions here, but no studies that seriously test competing claims.

In addition to these basic queries, there are several important issues that we can now contemplate because we know answers to the first and second of the basic questions noted above. We don't have answers to these questions, but we can start getting to work on them. These include: What are the conditions of successful, cross-minority coalitions? What have been the consequences of new remedies and procedures, beyond district-based voting, which have been put into place in about two dozen jurisdictions? These include cumulative voting and limited voting. How do we know when these kinds of remedies are justified? Have some of the methods that have been used to increase representation had unintended costs for participation qua voter turnout?

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Political scientists interested in the issues we treat here in this issue ought to be reading a neglected classic, W.E.B. Du Bois's 1935 masterpiece, *Black Reconstruction in America*. Although quite long and sometimes hard reading, it is an intellectual tour-de-force -- an act of sheer transcendence of the racist historiography and social

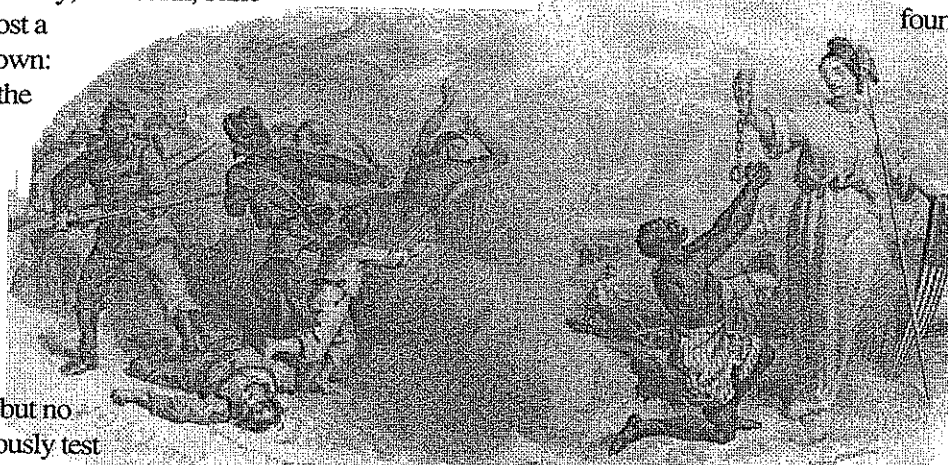
science of Du Bois's time. Key figures in the foundation of American

political science -- John Burgess, William Dunning, Woodrow Wilson, Albert Bushnell Hart -- had helped to devise an extensive program of scholarship that mischaracterized Reconstruction. Du

Bois's work was and still is a beacon of light on the period. Among its accomplishments is Du Bois's demonstration that the Emancipation

Proclamation was in key respects

forced upon Lincoln by the collective, self-emancipatory action of much of the enslaved African-American population. His analysis places the woodblock we use here in rather ironic light. It anticipates in several ways the new social science of social movements that has emerged in the past decade. Fortunately, his book has just been reissued in paperback by the Atheneum press and is now widely available.



"EMANCIPATION"

1866 Harper's Weekly Woodblock Carving