

REMARKS BY ALFRED DE GRAZIA

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In reply to your letter of December 2, I am privileged to submit a few remarks concerning federally-sponsored social research. I understand that you have already made some use of the studies conducted by Mr. William Ellis and myself which appeared in the *American Behavioral Scientist* under the title of *The Federal Government in Behavioral Science*, May 1964. [These are reproduced in Part I.]

Several hundred pages would be all too little for the task that you have set. However, following your suggestion, I shall comment on your questionnaire in the order in which the questions are presented. I hope that you will understand that they are in no way a substitute for the careful and systematic studies that I have published in this area.

A. THE ROLE OF PRIVATE SOCIAL SCIENTISTS WITH REGARD TO GOVERNMENT
POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

2. I believe it is a fact that political scientists and a number of social scientists have diminished the amount of energies that they devote to practical issues of public policy because of their increased concern with technical problems and the theoretical problems of their disciplines. Yet the opinions of political scientists and social scientists are needed on governmental affairs and they form an ever larger part of those concerned with active politics.

But on the other hand, they cannot progress scientifically unless they divorce themselves, a large part of the time, from debate on issues. I would say that the academic man has no more responsibility to spend his time examining issues of public policy than the next man, and that responsible public officials have no more authority to call upon them to devote themselves to these issues than any private citizens would have. I think it is only reasonable to rely upon the judgment of individual scholars themselves as to when they may devote themselves to issues of public policy, and to what extent.

3. The federal government should expect no more from private social scientists in the formation, implementation, and evaluation of national policies and programs than they would expect from any other type of citizen of like education, background, and affluence. That is, they would normally get more than the average, possibly considerably more than the average. More than that the federal government may obtain by appropriating resources to that end, just as they would by buying other commodities on the open market.

4. Although my substantive field is political science, I have an interest in the philosophy and methodology of social science, and I shall answer this question broadly. We can do much today to bring rationality and scientific method to bear upon the determination of alternate means of achieving public objectives. This is as much a matter of *organization* as it is of individual interest. The sciences have to be *organized* appropriately into projects or programs for the purpose of contributing directly to the solution of social problems.

It is important to understand that practical problems do not have a natural or neutral or scientific solution. In most cases it is necessary to know ahead of time where you want to go, what you want to do, and what is the preferred situation that you foresee, before you institute the scientific operations themselves. Now, of course, the social sciences are, and all sciences are, able, in the process of lending their technical expertness, to provide new insights about the motives and preferences, of policy-makers that were never before thought about; therefore these insights actually do have an effect upon decisions and policies and preferences. This very important fact should not lead us to abandon all restraint in preaching, as scientists, our own solutions for social problems.

5. It is difficult to prove that any science has solved a major social problem. Even in the physical sciences and in chemistry and engineering it is difficult to show what developments were produced by scientists and which by "mere mechanics". As I see the matter, we have progressed largely by producing an ever larger number of social and political engineering experts, and the whole of governmental operations has been raised correspondingly.

6. There is always a danger that both natural and social scientists will color their findings and allow their personal and political views to intrude on their work. Science is no substitute for appropriate and intelligent political supervision. The government itself, particularly Congress and the Presidency, need a reorganization to cope with the problem of supervising Congress.

B. ON THE BALANCE OF FEDERAL EXPENDITURES FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

7. Not only is data complicated but solutions are complicated here. The policy-making apparatus of the government needs to be examined to devise new methods by which scientific materials and studies may be more readily and understandably conveyed to the policy-maker. This is only partly a matter of money since very few millions of dollars would go a long way here. The problem is one of the time of decision-makers to participate in the action-research required. They have to sit down with scientists in various areas of policy to determine just what kind of information flow they need, how to handle it, how to "kick it back and forth," how to emerge with solutions which the policy-makers believe are representative with respect to the country.

I have indicated in other writings, *Congress: First Branch of Government, Apportionment and Representative Government*, and various articles in *The American Behavioral Scientist*, what are some of the topics that need to be especially researched and what institutions are needed to do so. For example, a sanctions institute, for research in all the ways in which governments establish penalties and execute penalties for violations of the myriad regulations and laws, and for determining the actual effects of different kinds of sanctions, is needed.

8. Numerous agencies sponsor social research of excellent quality. I think nobody can know the answer to this and even the collected judgment may be difficult to justify.

9. Here again, any naming at this point would not be useful.

10. This again is subject to an overall survey and coordination from the standpoint of policy.

11. This is an important point. Costs and benefits of social research projects and programs can be measured with enough reliability to serve the decision-making process. It has not been done, and should be done. The place to do it is in Congress and in associated research councils and institutions of the Congress, bringing in, of course, the executive agencies for information, consultation, and advice. The major priorities should be with Congress.

C. ON THE INSTITUTIONAL LOCATION OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

12. The federal agencies should sponsor at universities only research which they can in no sense control. They may sponsor at independent non-profit organizations research of all kinds. The same thing is true of profit-making organizations. That is, they should endeavor to conduct as much research as possible outside of the agency and they should attempt to favor research done by profit-making organizations as opposed to independent non-profit organizations. The reason for this is that the profit making organizations may well have better efficiency records and furthermore pay large sums of taxes on their profits. More research is needed in this area to determine the efficiency of the one type of organization as against the other. I appreciate that universities have grown to be dependent upon sponsored research that goes right down into the heart of the institution. This is a serious condition, which the university administrators, if they are deeply concerned with the university programs in the arts and sciences, would deplore.

13. It would be better if the government left a great many kinds of social research entirely to non-governmental sponsors. It does not make sense for the government simply to act as a great collector and disseminator of many types of social research. If the government becomes interested in one or another type of research from time to time, it may discover many methods for stimulating such research without undertaking it or sponsoring it directly. The task of defining what types of research are best not done by government is extremely complicated and cannot be undertaken here.

D. RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

14. There are numerous restraints and restrictions on freedom of publication in government grants for contracts for research. They have to do with the nature of the sponsor, what proportion of the research may be published, if any at all, and many other restrictions. Sometimes there are no restrictions. One takes a position having to do with all the factors involved in the situation. The main problem arises when there is a misunderstanding at the beginning about who should be free to publish what.

15. There has been some problem of advance clearing of questionnaires. Actually, the problem sometimes arises even when people from the outside ask questions of agencies. Despite the fact that the agency does not have to answer the questionnaire from the outside, it may attempt to tell the outside party that it is required to clear with the Bureau of the Budget. This is not the law.

E. ETHICS

16. Various ethical issues around the right of privacy or the right to not be researched will continue to constitute a sore problem. It is easy to foresee that the federal government may both promote a number of intrusions upon privacy and liberty in this regard and also impose onerous restrictions of all types on the use of research funds, in the name of defending liberty. This is a formidable bureaucratic problem that may be inevitable and permanent. The long chain of command and line of communications from the subject through the research organization through all the agencies of government including the police and justice agents may end up in a depressing tangle in which neither individual right nor free research is helped.

F. ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

17. I believe that the Congress should again consider the question whether the National Science Foundation is a necessary institution. Government grants of a large scale to research may be desirable, but there are other methods of handling the problem without creating a large establishment in Washington for the purpose. For instance, the universities of the country are already in the business of doing research. They know how to spend money for a large variety of research and most often do not undertake work of importance in certain areas because of lack of funds and not because of lack of desire. There is little reason to believe that an allocation of funds on some general principle set by the Congress may not result in such a university's doing the kinds of research it thinks it should do. N.S.F. and all the other research agencies of the federal government are together contributing measurably to the bureaucratization of higher education in America. Indirectly this may be contributing to the wide-spread student discontent around the country. The students generally feel that the university has stopped looking in their direction, but instead is looking in the direction of sources of support and activities that do not reflect upon the welfare or intellectual advancement of the student body.

18. If there is nothing wrong with the establishment of a national science foundation, then there can be nothing wrong with the establishment of a national social science foundation. Since there is a great need for applied or policy science research in the social sciences, it would be well to institute a social science research foundation under the auspices of Congress, rather than in a separate foundation, recognizing the applied or practical aspect of the social sciences as it has never been recognized before. Simultaneously, the Congress might wish to establish a fund for the advancement of the social sciences that would be parcelled out among eligible institutions in the country regardless of need, but only by some measure of proportionality or capacity. This would be one way of experimenting with the theory that a great national establishment for the spending of research funds in the pure sciences is unnecessary and may ultimately have some effect upon the question of the establishment or the continuing establishment of the N.S.F.

19. I think that White House conferences generally are most effective when the President and his advisors know what they want ahead of time. The conference is a useful tool to help obtain it. Here, I think that such a conference would not know what it wanted to do ahead of time and would therefore produce a rather confused report that would neither help clarify the nature of social science nor advance the cause of social science.

20. There is no basic distinction between social and natural sciences, nor between social and natural science technology, nor between applied and pure science in the social and natural sciences. Therefore, any separation of the two is likely to be false, when that separation is founded upon a desire to give more practical effect to the social sciences. The result is likely to be the continued neglect of social science considerations in natural science judgment and a further isolation of the social sciences. This would be true even though a slight slackening of a few social science research budgets in the government might occur. Actually, the federal government is now spending a great deal of money in social research. Much of it, as in the Office of Education, and the National Institutes of Health, is as wasteful and guilty of disproportionately swelling certain areas, not necessarily the most important ones in the social sciences, as much as are the counterpart expenditures in the natural sciences. The total picture is not a pleasant one. But neither is it worse in the social sciences than in the natural sciences. Until such time as Congress decides to consider as a whole the role of government in research and development, this picture will continue to dominate science in government. The only office of social science attached to the executive or the legislative branch of government that I could presently contemplate with equanimity would be an office charged with responsibility for recommending the disengagement of the federal government from a great variety of natural and social science programs of research and the handing over of such programs to autonomous local educational institutions and foundation and research groups. The only quality that entitles the federal government to engage in a great amount of research and to sponsor and distribute funds for a great amount of research is its ability to collect funds from the population. If this thesis be held firmly in mind, one would be apt to come to much clearer and firmer conclusions about government research policies and organization.

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~~ANONYMOUS ECONOMIST~~

~~[A senior economist with a nonprofit organization]~~

~~A. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENTISTS WITH REGARD TO GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS~~

~~2. The economics profession could make a substantially greater contribution to the resolution of public policy problems, based on the current stock of "intellectual capital." There is some basis for concern that too small a proportion of our professional activities are devoted to public policy problems and too large a proportion to investment activities in our professional field. A part of the responsibility for~~

this situation rests with the government; in many areas in which there is a substantial consensus of the economics profession, the advice of economists is not solicited, recognized, or followed. A part of the responsibility, however, rests with the economics profession; on net, compared to other professions, recognition and reward in the economics profession are probably heavily biased in favor of making small improvements in our professional tools rather than in using these tools. These views are probably best expressed in the article by George J. Stigler on "The Economist and the State" in *The American Economic Review* of March 1965. As an individual, I do not believe the economist has any special responsibility except as a citizen to examine issues of public policy. In a situation, however, in which his activities are either directly or indirectly supported by public funds, the economist, of course, has a responsibility consistent with the nature of his contractual commitment.

3. The federal government should expect no special contribution by private economists except as citizens, in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of national policies and programs. At the margin, free advice from any profession is worth just what it costs. If the federal government desires a greater contribution by economists to the resolution of its problems, it should expect to have to increase the level of public financing of economic research or spell out the terms of existing public support rather more carefully.

4. There are several major areas of domestic social problems in which there is a substantial consensus among the economics profession in which the assistance of economists is either ignored or inadequately recognized. Among these areas are the public welfare and income maintenance programs; the agricultural price support programs; the regulation of transportation and communications; the social control of air pollution, water pollution, and noise; federal disaster policy; use of public lands; and federal investment in water and transportation resources.

5. A major contribution that economists have made during the last several decades is the set of policies which reduce the fluctuation in aggregate economic activity and provide an environment for orderly economic growth. On these issues there is a substantial consensus within the profession concerning the appropriate policies, although there remain substantial differences concerning the rationale for these policies. All other contributions by the economics profession are minor by comparison, but should be recognized. Among such contributions are the new information systems and management techniques being used by the Department of Defense and gaining increasing use in other federal agencies. By and large, however, the potential contribution of economists to improving the management of the public sector has barely been exploited.

6. There is a substantial danger, but no more so than from any other profession, that economists will allow their personal and political views to color their research findings and the interpretation of these findings. One should not expect economists to be any more concerned about "the public welfare," whatever that means, than any other citizen. Major protection against the personal bias of economists and other professionals is to provide an environment in which all important points of