

Communications

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

The following exchange of correspondence might be of interest to your readers for reasons that should be self-evident. As background, I should say that when we signed our contract with this particular publisher, we were dealing with an editor of the old school who happened to like books and authors more than money. Needless to say, he is no longer there. Anyway, the fun began with a letter from The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. Educational Publishing Division and was addressed to Professors Eulau and Prewitt.

Heinz Eulau
Stanford University

* * * * *

5 August 1977

Gentlemen:

Re *Labyrinths of Democracy* (Urban Governors Series). Contract Date: 14 March 1966.

Demand for your book has diminished to the point that we are obliged to consider letting it go out of print. Annual sales have decreased to less than 300 copies per year, and it is no longer feasible for us to keep it on hand.

We are exploring the possibility of including your book in a remainder sale. As you probably know, remainder sales yield only fractional value of a book and pay no royalty. If you wish to know more about the provisions which govern remainder and out of print procedures, then I suggest you consult your contract.

We are proud to have had your title on our publishing list. It has contributed to what Mark Twain once called "the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most previous possession—its native literary product."

Sincerely yours,
[Signature]
Editorial Director

* * * * *

August 24, 1977

Dear Mr. [Editorial Director]:

I was shocked by your letters, or at least one of them, of August 5, 1977, informing me that you proposed to take *Labyrinths of Democracy* off the market. That *Lawyers in Politics* has

had its day is understandable. But *Labyrinths* has barely begun to have an impact.

Perhaps I should say something that you do not seem to understand. *Labyrinths of Democracy* is a serious scientific book for serious political scientists whose importance and merit is not to be judged by its sales over a very short period of time. It was given to Bobbs-Merrill in clear view of this prospect, for there were any number of other publishers eager to have it. From all I know about serious scientific books, a period of ten years is minimally necessary for appropriate distribution. *Labyrinths* was not reviewed in the *American Political Science Review*, though extremely favorably, until early this year. I am sure that overseas and library sales are far from finished. I would consider it therefore a catastrophe, from the point of view of serious scholarship, if the book should be remaindered at this time or let go out of print, as if it were a textbook that no longer serves the purpose of instruction because it has become obsolete. A book like *Labyrinths* is never obsolete because it represents an important step in the development of a body of research literature of interest to scholars for a long time. I was sorry to learn, therefore, that you seem to take such a narrow view of what serious publishing of serious books is about.

I should also say that I resented your sending your letter "certified." In my many years of dealings with many publishers I have come to trust them and they have come to trust me. It strikes me as a gratuitous gesture to "certify" a letter like yours, especially in view of your last paragraph. I doubt that Mark Twain thought of "the most prodigious asset of a country" in terms of sales.

Sincerely yours,
Heinz Eulau

* * * * *

8 September 1977

Dear Professor Eulau:

What are you—an injustice collector? I sent my last letter to you "certified" because of the vagaries of the mail service and because it contained what I thought was important information which I did not want a letter carrier or clerk to misplace. By the tone of your response, I gather that I hit a nerve. Sorry. Nothing personal.

Now regarding your letter of 24 August: If we

29 September 1977

Dear Professor Eulau:

Mr. [Editorial Director] has asked me to reply to your letter of 23 September and tell you that we are sending thirty paper copies of your book, *Labyrinths of Democracy* as you requested. You will be billed for them at 25% of the list price, or \$2.25 per copy, fob Indianapolis; but please wait until you receive our invoice before you remit the payment.

Thank you for writing; and if I may be of further help, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,
[Mrs.]

Mr. [Editorial Director]'s Secretary

* * * * *

END OF THE AFFAIR

To the Editor:

I am interested in communicating with other political scientists interested in the area of political corruption and organized crime. If colleagues are currently doing research on either of these topics and are interested in exchanging ideas and information, please write to me at the Department of Political Science, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131.

Peter A. Lupsha
University of New Mexico

To the Editor:

Due to a misunderstanding between Professor Susan Tolchin and myself, the 1977 letters of the national and national Capital area Ad Hoc Committee for a Representative Slate erroneously listed Professor Tolchin as having endorsed all the members of the Ad Hoc slate when in fact she endorsed only those members previously endorsed by the Women's Caucus. The fault was mine, and I apologize for it.

Austin Ranney
American Enterprise Institute

To the Editor:

I am interested in public utilities research and would be glad to hear from political scientists and others doing research in the area. My address is: Lenneal Henderson, Associate Director of Research, Joint Center for Political Studies, 1426 H Street, N.W., Suite 296, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Lenneal Henderson, Jr.
Joint Center for Political Studies

do not measure a book by its sales, how shall we assess its impact? Surely you know that publishers, no less than universities, are practicing accountability. We are introducing modern business practices into the operation of this Company . . . standard, twentieth century procedures . . . before the next century dawns. Am I to understand that this is your first book of more than a dozen published titles to be tagged for remaindering?

Labyrinths has had a full four years to prove itself. In that time it has sold approximately 600 copies in cloth and 700 copies in paper. We still have on hand more than 600 copies in cloth and twice that number in paper. Even university presses, the normal outlet for a scholarly book like yours, take stock periodically, identify the slow-moving titles, and have clearance sales. Such are the dictates of sound business practice.

Since I find nothing in the contract of 14 March 1966 which would prohibit our proposed remaindering, we shall proceed. I regret the indignity to you, but I can assure you that many authors have suffered the same fate.

If you wish to purchase copies of *Labyrinths* at 25% of the retail price, as provided in our author-publisher contract, you may do so. The list price of the cloth edition is \$15, and the paper, \$9; thus you may purchase the cloth for \$3.75 and the paper for \$2.25. When stock is exhausted, we will revert the rights (including copyright) to you, and you will be free to explore publication elsewhere. Perhaps one of the publishers who was eager to bring the book out in the first place or the Institute of Political Studies would be interested in acquiring the rights.

Sincerely yours,
[Signature]
Editorial Director

* * * * *

23 September 1977

Dear Mr. [Editorial Director]:

Thank you for your informative letter of 8 September. Please have 30 copies of the paper edition of *Labyrinths* sent to me at the quoted 25% of retail price.

As to your question, "If we do not measure a book by its sales, how shall we assess its impact?" may I suggest that you measure it by its critical reception, its scholarly merits, its scientific future, its literary worth, its future promises as a model for the next generation, etc.?

Do you think we should publish this exchange of correspondence? It might provide some free advertising for the remainder sale.

Sincerely yours,
Heinz Eulau

* * * * *