

Tuesday Luncheons

Since the time I wrote my article, "Doing 'Tuesday Lunch' at Lyndon Johnson's White House: New Archival Evidence on Vietnam Decisionmaking" (*PS*, December 1991), certain changes have occurred regarding researchers' access to "Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings." Access to the notes is no longer granted on a case-by-case basis—the voluminous notes at the Lyndon Johnson Library on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin are now open to all researchers. Mr. Johnson (a former deputy press secretary, but not related to the late President) continues to retain his copyright of the notes and to require written permission for their publication.

Also, an archivist has pointed out to me that my article failed to make clear that many of the meetings between President Johnson and his various Vietnam advisers (where Tom Johnson took his notes) were *not* actually luncheons held on Tuesdays. Thus, of the many important advisory sessions recorded in notes, many were not actually "Tuesday Luncheons."

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Diversity and Multiculturalism: The Need to Educate Students and Faculty

As a member of the Curriculum Committee at Rivier College I had the opportunity to learn how others think about diversity and multiculturalism. During the 1991-92 academic year the members of the committee examined ways to integrate issues related to diversity and multiculturalism in all of our courses. It was not an easy task and our work has not yet been completed.

I am particularly interested in diversity and multiculturalism because I was born and lived most of my life in Greece. As a young man, living on a small island in the Aegean, I never spoke to a person from a foreign land. "Foreigners" were perceived to be different and an interesting topic of conversation.

Diversity and multiculturalism are about understanding people whose values, beliefs, views, race, life style, accent, etc. differ from our own. I want to emphasize the need to make a greater effort to familiarize ourselves with different accents because of the greater integration of the international system. How successful can the United States be in this new international system when we as citizens of the United States are not accustomed to hearing different accents? How successful can we be when many times we are offended because someone sounds different from us and we cannot easily understand them?

I am encouraged by the fact that my college and many other institutions of higher education are devoting more energy and resources to diversity and multiculturalism. It is very important for our students and faculty to become more sensitive to the needs of others and realize that the world is dramatically changing.

It is important to educate our students and to make them "citizens of the world." It is necessary for us as teachers to engage our students in discussions related to the diversity of our society as well as to the differences between the United States and other countries. The objective will be to demonstrate the uniqueness of every society and how we can learn from each other.

It is even more imperative to educate faculty. How can professors educate their students when they need as much training? In my discussions with other faculty I often encounter difficulties. Many are surprised that I do have an accent and at one point I was advised by a col-

league to see a speech therapist in order to sound like an American! It is time for teachers to also stop making derogatory remarks about ethnic groups. It is time to become more empathetic.

It was disheartening to hear the chair of my department telling me as a first semester student in the United States that I should have gone to the Soviet Union, Bulgaria or Hungary for graduate work. It was upsetting to me when a few weeks later a university administrator told me that as a foreign student I should not expect special treatment. I just wanted a letter from him verifying my enrollment at the school! It was devastating to hear someone saying that I take jobs away from Americans. I am a United States citizen! It is still surprising to me when students tell me that they have never heard anyone with an accent.

It is urgent that we, as teachers, educate ourselves so that we better prepare our students to cope with the changing world. I look forward to the day when people of different backgrounds and different accents are in the same room talking with each other without being disturbed by the differences among them.

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Communication

During the past two years, three books (Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991; Page and Shapiro 1992) and one edited volume (Ferejohn and Kuklinski 1990) have been published raising the general question of the rationality of the citizenry. While the late V. O. Key, Jr., was no formal rational theorist he most certainly would have approved of the general thrust of these various authors, namely, that the voters are not fools. Public choice analysts have, since Downs, argued the same theory but with little

apparent success. Now we have political scientists with impeccable credentials making the point in various other ways their brethren can understand and accept or, at least, not ignore.

My concern is not to agree or disagree with what is said in support of their general propositions nor to review those books as a school of thought. Rather, I wish to comment on one particular position set forth in one of the books—an argument that could as easily have been included in any of the other volumes. And, it is an important matter. I refer to the Page and Shapiro treatment of voter consistency on matters of public spending and taxation (pp. 160-66).

The authors correctly claim that Key was wrong when he asserted that voters are inconsistent in wanting more spending while simultaneously opposing higher taxes. As the authors put it: “Can we defend the rational public against charges of fiscal profligacy?” (p. 161). Their answer is a resounding “Yes.” But what follows in the way of a defense is mostly a recitation of a lot of poll data showing voters sometimes favor expenditure reductions and increased taxes. V. O. Key’s judgement that it is unreasonable for voters to favor higher spending while opposing higher taxes is not really directly addressed. The authors are unable to explain the apparent anomaly because they do not take account of the institutional setting within which citizens form opinions and cast votes pertaining to fiscal issues.

In the political setting in which voters choose, to want both more spending and less taxes is every bit as rational as for consumers to prefer getting a higher quality good and paying less for it. But, unlike consumers of publicly-supplied goods, consumers of private goods in market cannot have it both ways; they must pay for what they get. In the market most costs and benefits are internalized in the same person. The political process, however, does not impose this crucial discipline on its participants. Thus, one set of citi-

zens may be the sole beneficiaries of a policy while a totally different set provide the resources. The institutional arrangements in a democracy are such that the acts of buying and paying are divorced making the enjoyment of greater expenditures entirely independent of paying for them. To demand more when one does not have to pay is as rational as complaining about having to pay for another’s benefits.

Since most publicly supplied goods and services are provided free of charge to recipients such people will demand more than they would if a charge were enacted. In fact, their total demand will be at the extreme right-hand end of their demand curve, i.e., where the marginal benefit of the last unit will be zero and the price is zero. Obviously, then, demand will exceed the supply the same person would provide as a taxpayer. As long as the beneficiary gets additional utility that person will demand more of the good; the fact that marginal costs exceed benefits for all those units beyond the optimal ($MB = MC$) is of no relevance to that beneficiary for others will bear the additional costs. In this sense, Milton Friedman was only partially correct when he said “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch.” That is true in the market but quite untrue for the short-run in the polity. In the complex fiscal accounts of the polity some people are always paying for the lunches of still others.

If benefits were not divorced from costs citizens would discipline their demands by their willingness to pay. But as things are, they face unrelated choices. As taxpayers they usually support reductions while as consumers they favor more spending. Even if a citizen were to limit her demands she would still be forced to pay taxes so why limit one’s demands? To put it still another way—one’s tax bill will not be determined by one’s demands, excepting for user-fees which have some semblance to market prices.

Finally, the authors note that voters sometimes favor cutting expenditures and raising taxes. More

particularly, they can do this not because they are altruists (which they may be) but along the lines of the above reasoning which suggests that expressing opinions is quite different from acting on them. Various polls have shown that voters confronted with questions about increasing expenditures on various popular items will support increases but when asked how much more they would be willing to pay in taxes suddenly decrease the amount of the expenditures. Likewise, as Page and Shapiro note, taxpayers love to cut the benefits of “undeserving” others and to pass taxes on to the abstract corporation and the rich. Given the situation, these too, are rational, self-interested choices.

Although the authors do not examine the politicians’ choices it is quite clear that the latter understand the situation of citizen and enact the inefficient spending and taxing policies ($TB < TC$ and $MB < MC$); confer concrete benefits on small interest groups; “pay” for them with indirect taxes on this generation and direct taxes on the unborn. Thus, they foster inflation and deficits whose consequences ordinary people cannot possibly understand. And even if they did, what difference would it make?

So, Page and Shapiro are empirically correct but analytically confused. In any event they raise a singularly important matter.

References

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