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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE \$40,000 MISUNDERSTANDING

**5001 White Flint
Kensington, Maryland
5 January, 1981**

Dear Don:

Don't be too quick to disavow the new \$40,000 annual dues for ASA. Think of the revenue it would bring in, even if membership dropped to a handful. I must say I was really pleased when my boss sheepishly acknowledged that it would put me into a more exclusive club than any of his memberships. And it gives me a powerful argument in

requesting a raise this year. My only hurdle so far is that the Credit Union has turned down my request for a loan to cover these dues. But, of course, the CU is made up of MBA's who don't really understand such professional obligations. I must say that this was the boldest move I've ever seen by an organization trying to deal with financial crisis. And, as everyone knows, what this country needs is more bold leadership. Carry on!

Curtis Huff

**Department of Political Science
Washington University in St. Louis
2 December, 1980**

Dear Mr. Cosentino:

I'm sure that I'm neither the first, nor am I likely to be the last, person to bring to your attention the starting fee schedule noted in your December 1, 1980 letter.

You will understand that it really threw me off my stride, causing all sorts of wild ideas to surface. In the end, I decided to hazard everything by sending in a \$40 membership, but I do so with considerable misgiving because the meaning of the phrase in question still remains unclear:

1. Were you attempting to discourage membership of people earning more than \$20,000 p.a.? I can understand such a move; the organization probably contains far too many old, senile, and useless scholars. The new fee schedule represents a far more humane way of weeding out the geriatrically unfit than, for example, an *auto da fe* at the next annual meeting.

2. Was this an attempt to lower the ASA's administrative overhead by simplifying membership procedures? It certainly makes sense. If only *one* person paid the new membership dues (or *mirabile dictu*, two), why you wouldn't have to bother about the rest of us, who could simply come along for the ride. You'd save on mailings, membership forms, etc; with one or two paying members at the \$40,000 level, why it might be possible even to abolish part of the Executive Secretary's functions.

3. Did we perhaps mistakenly get a mailing destined for oil mogel members of the Arabian Studies Association? It would be understandable if the addressees were in Kuwait, Bahrein, Sharjah, Abu Dabi, or Riyadh, but not if they were in fact in Des Moines, Peoria, Oakland, or St. Louis.

In any case, as I said, I'm sending in the card with a \$40 check. If this isn't enough, please return the check, and let me know if I can help locate someone who can afford the higher fee.

Sincerely,
Victor T. Le Vine

ANOTHER MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY?

**14 Washington Place East
New York City
19 January, 1981**

Dear Mr. Cosentino:

I strongly object to membership in any organization based on personal income. You have a category for "students and unemployed members". You have none for those over 65. You should.

I am 84 years old. I first went to Africa in 1924 when my editor said, "I'll send you for 6 weeks, because I admire the research you've done to prove there is a story. But if