

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Life's absurdities, I have long since concluded, must be regarded as having intrinsic merit. To think otherwise would demand acquiescence to an ulcer-ridden fate rife with Hobbesian overtones. Indeed, one need not have joined Zero Mostel in his wait for Godot to acknowledge the need for an appreciation of the ridiculous. Several vignettes of recent date, moreover, underscore the peculiarities of an editorial Life with LARR. Consider, for one, a scene in the Atlanta airport last November at 1:00 a.m., where the editors awaited (with thanks to Eastern Airlines—where were Borman and Rickenbacker when we needed them?) a delayed flight to Houston for the LASA meeting. While a thoroughly spaced-out fellow passenger loudly intermixed salacious stories with near-hysteria over fears of flying, the Editor surreptitiously eyed a copy of *Penthouse* (editorial judgment precluding *Hustler* from consideration); the Associate Editor noted possibilities for holiday gifts in a Brooks Brothers catalog; and Our Little Armenian, alias the Managing Editor, sat engulfed in several hundred copies of our report for the Association (well, *someone* had to carry them).

In any event, a few hours after reaching Houston we donned our starched LARR T-shirts and appeared with our report, daisily fresh, for discussion with the LASA Executive Council. Let me share with you its major points, which reflect the twenty months from January 1976 through September 1977. During this period we received a total of 121 manuscripts (unrefereed research notes and announcements are excluded), representing a 5% increase over the previous period. Disciplinary breakdowns (with figures from our earlier report in parentheses) are as follows: political science 23% (26); history 19% (29); literature and languages 17% (7); economics 11% (6); and Sociology 9% (8). Other fields represented by not more than 2% included anthropology, geography, education, health affairs, philosophy, journalism, business administration, and social work. Thus we see a decline in the preponderance of submissions from political science and history; a healthy increase for literature and economics; and little change in other disciplines. We again encourage, indeed urge, those of you in underrepresented fields to send us your work for possible publication, and to let us know of your willingness to review books.

Sixteen percent of the items submitted for our consideration came from outside the United States (again excluding notes and announcements). Here we also strongly ask all of you to help stimulate the submission of materials from outside the country, with the reminder that we are prepared to publish in languages other than English, as readers will have noted in past issues. Further review of our log indicates that the average decision time stands at 89 days (barely falling under our standing goal of 90 days). The range is inevitably broad, running from 15 to 234 days as our extremes.

Establishment of the Books in Review section in 1974 meant a substantial time lag during the early months, as publishers were contacted for review copies and essays were solicited. By this juncture, however, the section is thriving. During the period in question we have printed 40 reviews, covering a total of 153 works. We have on hand an additional 28, which will be appearing in upcoming issues, and the flow of commissioned reviews continues.

As our editorship has progressed, it has become increasingly difficult to fight off an accumulating backlog. LASA finances mitigate against the publication of LARR four times annually and, somewhat surprisingly, it develops that the cost of periodically printing an oversize issue is almost equivalent to an extra issue. Beginning with volume 13, number 1, our recourse has been to publish the entire journal in a smaller type face. Consequently, subscribers will henceforth be getting more for their money, although the resultant price may be advancing myopia.

Discussions at Houston also led to an additional measure that will provide substantially more space in every third issue: to wit, deletion of the Current Research Inventory after the forthcoming 1978 listing. Although entertaining doubts as to its utility from the outset, we nonetheless introduced in 1974 a number of changes in format and style as a means of making its contents more readily accessible and retrievable. Three years' subsequent experience have strongly suggested that the usefulness of the CRI constituted a large question mark. My own personal view was evident from the fact that I had neither used it myself in years nor contributed an entry concerning my own research (although a collaborator once slipped in my name along with his own). Added to this was the enormous editorial burden it placed on the staff, especially Leah Florence and our General Factotum and Jack-of-all-Trades, James Padgett.

Given the CRI's long-standing history in LARR, however—no matter how quixotic, awkward, or dysfunctional—we felt obliged to seek the advice and consent of both the Editorial Board and the Executive Council. At our breakfast with the former there were lengthy discussions, out of which came a clear and unanimous recommendation that the forthcoming CRI be the last. We carried this to the council, which concurred.

What else of burning moment should be brought to your attention? The Managing Editor recently encountered a vivid illustration of the perils of literal translation, when the equivalent of "Onward Christian Soldiers" was rendered as "March Forward Soldiers of Jesus." One of our correspondents has suggested a new organizational jewel for the present Latin American Studies diadem. Thus we might add to MALAS, NCCLA, NECLAS, PCCLAS, RMCLAS, SCOLAS, SECOLAS, and SULA, a Fun Conference on Latin American Studies, from which would be proscribed all "bores, *apasionados*, and sectarians." I will be happy to forward mail from wouldbe joiners to the originator of the proposal. Similarly meritorious projects are heartily encouraged, of course. Until there is occasion to report further such items to you, I can but reiterate Bob and Ray's wise and warmly wholesome admonition to "hang by your thumbs, . . ." and write.

JOHN D. MARTZ