that are often lost in the overly compartmentalized approaches of political science.

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References


TO THE EDITOR:

I am always pleased to respond to people who take the time to comment on my work. I should advise the reader at the outset, however, that David Lowery's criticisms have only a tangential relation to the main focus of my article which is, to recall, "the political implications of the public choice-property rights school" (my emphasis). My reply must be similarly removed from this central concern.

Lowery has three complaints, two specific and one general. The first specific charge is that I do not quote the complete sentence from which I take Samuels' phrase "the effort to make welfare economics safe for the market system." He is correct. (Indeed, the sentence is so long—158 words with substantive footnote, 108 words without—that Lowery does not quote it in its entirety either.) Whether this action is improper, however, depends not on whether Samuels says more than I cite (which action is improper, however, depends not on whether what I cite misrepresents one of the things he says. The latter I do not think can be sustained. Whether Lowery does or not is hard for me to determine. In any case, I quote the final three sentences from Samuels' discussion of the "Coase Rule" (1973, pp. 145, 146) which demonstrates I believe that I have accurately portrayed a major theme of his paper:

It is part of the natural history of social myths (including scientific doctrine serving as social myths) that they tend to be used wherever they will accomplish desired ends, in this case the further transformation of welfare economics to make it safe for capitalism. The Coase Rule is but one example of how the new welfare economics has chosen its assumptions and basic paradigm in such a way as to rationalize the market economy of a particular society, a return to an old tradition which Pigou dared to challenge and interrupt. Optimality in such a context is quite relative indeed.

Which brings us to the second specific accusation, that I am a secret follower of Pigou. To this indictment I plead innocent. I had thought that in my section on "the challenge of Pigou" I made clear the powerful counter-arguments of Coase and Buchanan in particular. My final section in this section reads (Furniss, 1978a, p. 401), "In short, market solutions are reimplemented at the center of welfare economics." How this sentence can be read to mean that they are not reimplemented I do not know. But if others were confused I am glad to be able to clarify the issue, especially because the central focus of my article is based on the proposition that the public choice-property rights school has succeeded in undermining Pigou's propositions. Else the perspective would have little standing, and I have no interest in discussing bodies of thought of minor importance.

Now I turn to Lowery's general message. He begins by positing two streams of property rights literature, neoclassical and institutional, and then concludes that in addressing only the former I sow confusion (leg us pass over "xenophobic" as a rhetorical flourish) in the minds of political scientists. Perhaps because of space limitations, this position is not developed (nor is its proposition defended) very systematically. In an effort to inject some order, I would call the criticism significant were any one of the following three conditions found. (To anticipate, none are.) These conditions are as follows:

A. That I make distinctions not present in economic literature (that is, the two streams form a single river). This is the most straightforward interpretation of Lowery's letter, and it is the one most easily disposed of. To begin with, my use of "public choice-property rights" was designed to remove any ambiguities about what I was covering, which is more, secondly, than is generally thought necessary. For example, in the references following their widely cited article in the Journal of Economic Literature,

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entitled simply "Property Rights and Economic Theory: A Survey of Recent Literature" (1972), Furubotn and Pejovich list 19 separate works by either Alchian, Buchanan, Coase or Demsetz. There is one reference to a work by either Ayres, Commons, Samuels or Schmid. Similarly, they list 14 articles from the Journal of Law and Economics and none from the Journal of Economic Issues. Obviously, this is not to say that Ayres, Commons, Samuels, Schmid et al. have not done or do not do good work, merely that their contributions are seen as distinct. Finally, I had thought that this distinction was accepted (with my qualifying "public choice-property rights" label) among institutional economists as well. I refer Lowery (as indeed I have not to say that Ayres, Commons, Samuels, Schmid et al. have not done or do not do good work, merely that their contributions are seen as distinct. Finally, I had thought that this distinction was accepted (with my qualifying "public choice-property rights" label) among institutional economists as well. I refer Lowery

B. That although public choice-property rights and institutional economics should be separated analytically, the position of the latter regarding the concept of property must be spelled out in any discussion because it is the unique, and viable, alternative (that is, there are only two streams). This notion can muster little support. I refrain from quoting numerous citations from Aristotle, Locke, Marx etc., each of whom has much that is valuable to say on the concept and rights of property, and mention only current theorists. Here we find property rights an essential element in the thought of figures as diverse in their normative conclusions as Rothbard, Nozick, Buchanan, Rawls, and Macpherson. (I pick these because they happen to be discussed in a very useful paper by Lehning, 1978.) We also find well-developed political positions based on a rigorous delineation of appropriate and inappropriate property rights. The most impressive effort, I feel, has been made by a group I term "functional socialists," whose arguments can be traced to R. H. Tawney and Ernst Wigforss (see Furniss, 1978b). Let us add that institutional economists contribute many insights into the nature of property rights as well; Lowery provides a list of references. The point, of course, is that all these contributions are best treated in separate papers or articles (as indeed I have done) or in a monograph detailing the implications of divergent perspectives on the concept of property. In this connection, a piece by Lowery that would argue that institutionalist economists "may contribute to our understanding of politics" might well be in order. But it is neither necessary nor relevant for me in the midst of a discussion of the political significance of the public choice-property rights school to pluck from among the myriad formulations of the concept of property those of institutional economics for sustained treatment. Unless it is claimed, . . .

C. That although distinct from the public choice-property rights school and only one of many perspectives on property, institutional economics has so eclipsed "neoclassical" economics that (to mix metaphors) institutional economics has become a mighty river while neoclassical economics has been reduced to a small creek. In this case one might declare (as Lowery at times seems to do) not that I should have incorporated both perspectives but that I have written the wrong article. I will not belabor the obstacles facing anyone attempting to argue seriously for this proposition, as opposed to merely stating it. Fortunately, we need not investigate what might be meant by the statement that "property rights analysis as practiced by institutionalist economists brings to the center of attention the inherent relationships between structure, behavior, and performance." There is no need for invidious comparison; for our purposes it is enough to note that the importance and intellectual influence of the public choice-property rights perspective can be exaggerated only with difficulty—the pages of this Review, for example, are full of debts, both implicit and explicit, to its basic conceptual thrust. Briefly, I refer the reader to the able presentation of Ostrom (1977). See also his citations. I would be glad to provide further references.

In sum, I continue to feel that my delineation of the public choice-property rights perspective is appropriate and that my argument is potentially significant. (Since Lowery states that my "criticisms apply" to the school, his letter does not offer much opportunity to say more than this.) I conclude on a conciliatory note. Scholars working in both the traditions of public choice-property rights and institutional economics share a disdain for mere "data manipulation" and a concern for elaborating the essential issues of economic and political life. James Buchanan puts the matter very well, and it is proper that he should have the final word (1976, pp. 167, 168):

The hard questions are not readily formulated in terms of testable hypotheses. But this offers no cause for not thinking about such questions, for not discussing them, for not searching for an appreciation and understanding. . . . We do not "solve" the "problem" of social order by producing a unique "solution," regardless of the sophistication of empirical techniques. There is no objective "truth" to be established here. The "problem" of social order is faced eternally by persons who realize that they must live together and that to do so they
must impose upon themselves social rules, social institutions. Economics and economists cannot evade their responsibility in the continuing discourse over such rules and institutions by shifting attention to trivialities. To the extent that they do so, their functional roles can only be filled by the charlatans and the fools, whose presence around us requires no demonstration.

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References


TO THE EDITOR:
As a person who once wrote a dissertation on Locke, I was intrigued to read Robert H. Horwitz’s review of the Clarendon edition of Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding (APSR 72:651-52). I was especially struck by the account of the difficulties Locke had with printers. Given Horwitz’s statement that “the Clarendon edition has been suspiciously inaugurated” it seems that the spirit of the seventeenth century lives on in printing as well as in philosophy.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The following articles have tentatively been scheduled to appear in the June, 1979, issue:

David O. Sears, Carl P. Hensler and Leslie K. Speer, University of California, Los Angeles, “Whites’ Opposition to ‘Busing’: Self-Interest or Symbolic Politics?”

Michael Johnston, University of Pittsburgh, “Patrons and Clients, Jobs and Machines: A Case Study of the Uses of Patronage”

Richard L. Cole, George Washington University, and David A. Caputo, Purdue University, “Presidential Control of the Senior Civil Service: Assessing the Strategies of the Nixon Years”

Edward T. Jennings, Jr., State University of New York, Buffalo, “Competition, Constituencies, and Welfare Policies in American States”

David John Gow, Rice University, “Scale Fitting in the Psychometric Model of Judicial Decision Making”

Arend Lijphart, University of California, San Diego, “Religious vs. Linguistic Class Voting: The ‘Crucial Experiment’ of Comparing Belgium, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland”

David M. Lampton, Ohio State University, “The Roots of Interprovincial Inequality in Education and Health Services in China since 1949”