

Department of Political Science
University of Toronto
100 St. George Street
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1

(416)-978-8220 (V)
(416)-978-5566 (Fax)

Please reply to: 7106 Bells Mill Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20817
(301)-365-5241

June 2, 1992

Dr. Duncan Luce
School of Social Sciences - Research Unit
in Mathematical Behavioral Sciences
University of California, Irvine
Irvine, CA 92717

Dear Dr. Luce:

Thank you for your letter and candor.

Would you be willing to discuss a rational, cost-benefit, analysis of whether the National Academy of Sciences should only give scientific advice that is perceived to be politically neutral? E.g., at what threshold might an expected cost to the country grow so great as to justify an exception to the decision rule and a whisper of criticism? Billions of dollars? Tens of billions? Hundreds of billions?

In the early 1980s, my conclusions might have been closer to your initial reaction. David Stockman and others with ideological theories, and a zealous sense of mission, would have perceived an initiative to develop new national indicators as a political threat by liberals, blocked it, and made the National Academy pay a high price if it persevered. Now - with forecasts of \$400 + billion annual deficits for the remainder of the decade, and diminished rates of growth - I judge the price of continued silence is too high. Too many of our hopes for the future are linked to the performance of the economy.

I think you may mis-read my motives as partisan. In the early 1980's I conducted a major literature review, under an NSF grant, to study barriers to learning by our political institutions. The report identified the improved testing of all ideological beliefs as a critical investment to remove barriers. During the past decade, I have achieved a reputation in some locations as a "Reagan Admirer" for suggesting that Republicans have a serious model that should be tested. My recent letter emphasizes top-down censorship, and the growing alienation of the National Academy's leadership from most of its constituencies - it is not a

scientific judgment of whose views the evidence will support.

If you and your colleagues do conduct a critical evaluation of macro-economic growth policies in the light of existing scientific literatures, and recommend new indicators with fairmindedness to all a priori views, everyone will win.

These public silences by national scientific institutions, and other failures of leadership, are damaging to the social sciences. There is an impression that social scientists haven't any good ideas, or anything worthwhile to say. Political psychology (and the wider Lasswell traditions) are dying-out at a time when - as I think you appreciate - these inter-disciplinary admixtures may produce unexpected and serendipitous results.

Your letter's forecast was disheartening. I will take the liberty to share it with other political psychologists with whom I have discussed the problem of these barriers to national learning and how they might be removed. I hope a solution can be found.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Lloyd S. Etheredge

cc: Philip Tetlock