

**Comments on the Committee on Political Parties Report
by Ralph M. Goldman
Roundtable Panel 35-13T, Saturday, September 3, 2000, APSA Meetings**

Please accept my apologies for failing to show up for these discussions due to unanticipated medical circumstances. I expect that my small contribution will be read by John K. White of Catholic University and vice president of the Center for Party Development.

Let me begin by calling your attention to the only history of the Committee's work, which appears in *Perspectives on Political Science*, vol. 21 (Spring 1992), no. 2. I have furnished a few copies for those who may be interested. The late Paul David prepared this comprehensive review and discusses the debates that ensued. He was mainly interested in laying to rest several misconceptions about the Committee and its report.

The first of these misconceptions was that the views of its chairman, E.E. Schattschneider, dominated the report. Not so. The drafts were the work of Bertram M. Gross, Paul T. David, and Fritz Morstein-Marx. When I came into the scene later on, I learned that Gross was the primary author.

The second misconception was that the Committee was committed to the British parliamentary party system as a model. Not so. The British system was alluded to in passing, as were others, to provide examples of points being made by the report.

Third was the notion that the Committee was united in support of the report. Not so. The Committee was divided almost to the point of producing no report at all. Nor did the final report receive much respect, undoubtedly because neither Gross, David, nor Morstein-Marx were professional political scientists. In effect, they were a caucus that grabbed the ball and ran with it.

Now for the autobiographical part. In 1950, I completed my doctoral dissertation on the history of the two party National Committees. The Parties Committee report had just come out. Since Elmer Schattschneider was one of my heroes, I read the report, considered many of its assumptions and recommendations naïve, but took it at its face value: a debating document that covered the ground quite thoroughly. When I first read the report in 1951, I knew nothing of the report's history or true authorship.

It happened that at this time Bert Gross was looking for someone to help him edit his *Legislative Struggle*. I accepted the job and cut the 600-page manuscript in half. Bert never fully forgave me, even though the book won the Association's Woodrow Wilson award. He then recommended me to Paul David, who was conducting the Association's Cooperative Research Project on national convention delegate selection and the Brookings studies of the national conventions. Which is how I became a member of these projects.

While editing Gross's *Legislative Struggle*, I happened to make some laudatory and derogatory remarks to Bert about the Parties Committee report. I wondered how Elmer Schattschneider could have made some of the more naïve assessments and suggestions. Whereupon Bert launched into a barrage of revelations and justifications. He revealed that he, David, and Morstein-Marx were the real authors. He also revealed that the common motivation of each of the three was to keep the New Deal legislation of the day in place and growing. While the report commented on almost every facet of the party system, its recommendations were intended to strengthen the New Deal wing of the Democratic Party at that time. After catching my breathe, I ended the conversation by repeating my belief that it would become a great debating agenda for the APSA -- which is what happened.