# PUBLIC POLICY AND THE STUDY OF POLITICAL FINANCE:

A review of past developments, current problems and opportunities for the future

Presented in honour of the memory of Professor Herbert E Alexander
1927-2008
Long-serving chairman and president of RC20, the International Political Science Association's Research Committee on Political Finance and Political Corruption

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Prepared for presentation at the IPSA mid-term conference in Montreal, 2 May 2008


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## 1. FOREWORD

*A tribute to Herb Alexander 1927-2008*

By an extraordinary coincidence, this paper is being presented on the thirtieth day after the death of one of the founding fathers of RC20, the International Political Science Association's research committee on political finance and political corruption.

It is Jewish custom to gather on the thirtieth day after a person's death to say prayers, mourn and to pay tribute. Since Herb was a loyal and active Jew as well as an internationalist, it is fitting as an act of respect to review the development of the study of political finance within RC20 over his working life.

Equally, he would have wished to look to the future, which is the main objective of the following pages.

At the time I attended my first IPSA World Congress, held in 1973 in Montreal, Herb was already the moving force in what was then the Study Group on Political Finance and Political Corruption. He chaired the study group from that time (and perhaps from before) through its transition in 1979 into a recognised IPSA research committee until the World Congress held in Berlin in 1994. At that point he felt it was time to hand over the chairmanship.

After this, Herb continued to be active in RC20 with the title of life president. He and his wife, Nancy, were the guests of honour at a dinner held in Quebec City during the World Congress of 2000. Professor Karl-Heinz Nassmacher, who was then the Committee's chairman and was editor of a *festschrift* dedicated to Herb, presented him with an advance copy. It was a complete surprise and a source of much pleasure, not least because the fact that nearly two dozen scholars had contributed to the work showed the fruits of his lifetime effort to promote the worldwide study of political finance.

A copy of my obituary of Herb in The Times (London) is given in the Appendix. It is one of a number of tributes that have been and will be published. In the United States, there were obituaries in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Washington Post. The Campaign finance Institute will be holding a major event in his honour in Washington on 18 June and the tribute by its executive director, to be published in the American Political science Association's PS also is appended. There are to be further accounts of his contributions to the field of political finance in Election Law Journal.

## 2. THE PAST

The comparative study of political finance goes back a fairly long time. Vilfredo Pareto and James K. Pollock Jr both produced significant publications on the topic. However, the first attempt to gather a group of scholars to study the subject in a systematic, comparative fashion was probably that of Richard Rose and Arnold J. Heidenheimer.

*The 1960s: Rose, Heidenheimer and the scientific method*

Rose and Heidenheimer were the organisers of the International Study Group on Political Finance, a precursor of RC20. In 1963, they published an ambitious set of studies of eight countries (not including the United States). This appeared in a special issue of The Journal of Politics. As young men in a hurry, they attempted at the same time to gather comparable political finance data from the eight countries and to analyse it in the form of a scientific index of expenditure-per-vote. In 1970, Heidenheimer was the editor of a second comparative volume, which concentrated on a study of laws about political funding and on the growth of public funding.

Both of these studies have aged very well and are examples of a determination to create a science of politics involving the testing of explanatory hypotheses with empirical data. Heidenheimer was especially interested in testing theories of political development, which were popular at that time. (Heidenheimer died in 2001 at the relatively early age of 71.)

Despite their academic elegance, attempts to use this scientific evidence in the study of political finance confront some serious problems and have tended to be ignored by members of RC20.

It is not easy to gain agreement between scholars on what constitutes "political finance". Without such agreement, standard measurements of the amount of political finance in different countries become impossible.

There is a broad consensus that "political finance" includes the funding of election campaigns. Usually, it covers also the funding (apart from campaigns) of political parties. However, it is not always simple to define "party" spending. In many countries there are nominally independent organisations which are, in practice, linked to or close to a political party. Some pressure groups support or oppose the interests of a party but do not belong to that party. In their publication of 1963, Rose and Heidenheimer made estimates of "politically relevant" or "politically related" expenditures. The wooliness of such terms illustrates the problem of definition.

Definitional difficulties apart, it often is hard to gain access to accurate data on election and party income and expenditure.

There is a third difficulty if the aim is to determine the impact of spending on the outcomes of legislative campaigns. Political spending may not be the only determinant of voting choices. In order to assess the importance of money, it is necessary to take account of these other influences. Scholars such as Jacobson have attempted to do this in studies of the effects of money on voting for the legislature. This is easier for elections to the legislature, where there are hundreds of parallel contests, than for national campaigns or for campaigns for the presidency or an equivalent office at state or local level.

Assuming that expenditures on legislative campaigns are accurately filed (a convenient assumption), assuming that voting results are accurately reported, and assuming that all the main other factors can also be measured, it then becomes possible to analyse the connections between money and voting. These are significant assumptions.

As a generalisation, scholars who are anxious to crunch data in the name of political science, tend to pay less attention to the limitations and accuracy of the data. By contrast, those fascinated by empirical detail are less likely to be interested in a comparative, scientific study.

### *Alexander and his successors: the study of political finance reforms and the search for scholars in virgin territories*

After Alexander became the leader of RC20, the previous stress on empirically testable theories of money-in-politics was largely abandoned within the Committee.

There were two main avenues of study. The first involved the examination of the regulatory reforms of political finance that were becoming so common from the 1970s onwards, and the second was the quest for wider geographical coverage.

Leading members of the RC had themselves been directly involved in the reform process in a number of countries. Khayyam Paltiel had been research director of the ground breaking Barbeau Committee in Canda (Committee on Election Expenses). At the RC's round table meeting in Oxford in the early 1980s, Paltiel was pursued by Canadian government lawyers who had crossed the Atlantic for his advice on a test case concerning one of the country's new political finance laws. Alexander had been executive director of President Kennedy's Commission on Campaign Costs and was a consultant to the US Senate Watergate investigations. Later, Karl-Heinz Nassmacher (Alexander's successor as chairman of the RC) served on the official body that supervised the operation of Germany's party funding laws. Menachem Hofnung (the current chairman) has advised the Israeli authorities and Marcin Walecki the Polish ones as well as the Council of Europe. Three RC members achieved high political positions, Kevin Casas as Vice-President of Costa Rica, Pilar del Castillo as a cabinet member in Spain and Ruud Koole as Chairman of the Netherlands Labour Party.

It was therefore only to be expected that an analysis of subsidies and of new regulations should have become a main focus.

The RC also devoted a great deal of attention to a search for colleagues in countries in which there had been little or no study of political funding. For many years, it proved impossible to find a scholar prepared to research into political finance in France, despite the efforts of Jean Charlot and others. One potential colleague said he risked his life if he were to carry out such a study. Eventually, Yves-Marie Doublet, a senior official of the French National Assembly, filled the gap and his important writings created an interest in the subject by a number of French scholars. From the late 1980s, the RC had the target of drawing countries in the Soviet bloc into its work. In 1989, Professor Jacek Tarkowski hosted the first round table meeting held behind what was then still the Iron Curtain. This was a meeting in a small town near Lublin in Poland in June 1989. Thanks to Professor Rei Shiratori, the RC met (also in 1989) in Tokyo. This meeting was followed by a book edited by Alexander and Shiratori.

From the 1990s onwards, scholars from the former Soviet countries played active and important roles in the RC. Walecki's Oxford University dissertation and subsequent book on Money and Politics in Poland led to similar (albeit less detailed) studies on other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In 2002 Janis Ikstens, a Latvian political scientist, was the lead author of a comparative article in an Austrian journal and in 2007, two members of RC20 published an edition of papers on Political Finance and Corruption in Eastern Europe.

Thanks to Daniel Zovatto, of International IDEA, the RC made some limited progress in extending its reach to Latin America. Apart from Kevin Casas's prize-winning doctoral dissertation on political funding in Costa Rica and Uruguay, there has still been too little empirical study of that continent, where political science tends (with exceptions, of course) to be limited to a legal approach.

The RC also has attempted to establish links with African scholars. It has made some headway, due in large part to Walecki's work for the International Foundation for Election systems (IFES). However, Africa, the Arab world and some of Asia are still too thinly covered.

Another significant development, due largely to Hofnung's work and to that of scholars who have not yet been directly connected with RC20, such as Dan Loewenstein and Keith Ewing as well as the team of legal specialists at the Library of Congress in Washington DC, is the study of laws and court judgements on political finance.

## 3. THE PRESENT

*Increasing interest of international agencies and non-governmental organisations in political corruption and political finance*

From the later 1980s, political corruption suddenly became a vogue topic for the World Bank, national development agencies and NGOs. This meant that there suddenly was a flow of money for anti-corruption research and advocacy.

The effect on the RC was fairly dramatic. For some scholars the opportunities provided by well-funded public bodies were too attractive to resist. Paradoxically, the high profile of political corruption in the field of public policy tended to subtract from the academic study of the subject. This is a personal judgement and it may not be universally agreed.

At an international level, Transparency International, a body created by former officials of the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat and similar bodies, expanded rapidly. In lieu of assessing the extent of corruption in particular countries, Transparency International created and marketed a "Corruption Perception Index". This was based on the subjective judgements of commercial political risk enterprises and of country experts employed by organisations such as the Economist Intelligence Unit.

From the mid 90s and especially in the present century, political finance has followed political corruption in commanding the increasing attention of governmental and international organisations.

From my own experience, this has had both positive and negative effects. These will be summarised. The final section will discuss how to take advantage of the new opportunities without suffering the undesirable consequences.

In the 1990s, several large NGOs initiated projects on political finance. They included the Washington-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), which conducted a comparative study as a way to assist the process of political finance reform in South Africa. Hofnung was a consultant to the study. The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES, also based in Washington) had a number of projects including one to advise the Russian federal election commission. A third project, sponsored jointly by the United Nations, IFES and the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Election Assistance (IDEA) was an electronic encyclopaedia which included a section on political finance.

The most ambitious project was also by International IDEA for a handbook giving advice on political finance together with a comprehensive analysis of political finance laws around the world and a large number of national and regional cases studies. Despite the extensive work carried out by a considerable number of scholars, mainly from RC20, much of the research was never published as a result of internal difficulties.

In 2000, the United States Agency for International Development prepared a handbook on transparency in political finance. This project was carried out together with IFES and, again, with several members of RC20. As follow-up IFES conducted a number of pilot studies designed to promote transparency in political financing in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Shortly afterwards, NDI won a significant contract from the UK Department for International Development to carry out an international study of levels of political spending. NDI also carried out a study of political parties in eight Asian countries. This included a detailed questionnaire on donations by officeholders to their parties of parts of their public salaries ("party taxes"). Laura Thornton, an RC20 member, was responsible for this important work.

The World Bank, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Union, Transparency International, The Carter Center, Organisation of American States, and IFES have also extended their work on political finance. International IDEA has maintained a database on political finance laws. Information on 27 countries has been or will be collected and published by GRECO (Group of States Against Corruption), a unit of the Council of Europe. The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) brought a case before a senior South African court in an effort to force some of the main political parties to publish their accounts. IFES has carried out political finance projects in eighteen countries, with RC20 member Marcin Walecki as its senior advisor on the subject and RC20 member Magnus Ohman as its chief of party in Sierra Leone. Since IFES has worked in some war-torn and post-conflict countries, it has been able to carry out pioneering work on political financing in these troubled places. One product of this experience was a n edited work on political finance in eight post-conflict countries.

Alexander remained closely in touch with some of these initiatives and was involved in some of them. They involvement of the leading international organisations of a number of national agencies for international development in the field of political finance consisted the fulfilment of his attempts and those of pioneers such as Paltiel to put the topic on the map. Paltiel had once been stung by a dismissive comment from a distinguished political scientist – a theorist of political systems – to the effect that political finance was not "real" political science. Unlike Paltiel, Alexander lived to see the "real" disproof of this.

*Opportunities presented by the increasing interest of international agencies and non-governmental organisations*

The increased interest shown by governmental and other public bodies has brought tangible academic benefits.

The first benefit is that the questions asked by development agencies, NGOs and international organisations have frequently made scholars explore new ground.

For example, the issue of when donors to parties and candidates should be obliged to declare their payments turns out to be considerably more complex than might initially have been supposed. Walecki's case study of Ukraine (published by transparency international) and the conflicting testimonies of academics in the law suit against some of the main South African parties brought by IDASA would probably not been written but for the demand for "real world" evidence.

The second advantage of the involvement of public organisations in political finance projects has been money. From time to time, it has become possible to gather together scholars from countries which previously were beyond the RC's reach. No fewer than 36 countries were represented at a meeting organised by the British Council, World Bank and IFES in 2004 at which RC20 was heavily represented and involved. The number of countries about which there are some accounts of political funding has grown rapidly.

Governmental finance for projects also has made it possible to collect empirical data that would otherwise have been out of reach. (Thornton's important research into "party taxes" in Asia is a good example.)

Third, the RC has been able to link academics and leading practitioners (for example, officials of election management bodies) to a considerably greater extent than before. The presence in RC20 of Nicole Gordon, who for many years ran the Campaign Finance Board of New York City, brings a valuable new dimension.

Fourth, the consultancy work of several members of the RC has created a healthy awareness of the realities of political financing, especially in poor or crisis-ridden nations. This has been especially valuable since the academic study of politics is often damaged by a lack of experience of the practical realities of political life, especially in poorer regions. For example, field experience shows how widely political finance laws are a dead letter. It tends also to destroy scholarly faith in the accuracy of official political finance statistics.

*Challenges presented by the increasing interest of international agencies and non-governmental organisations*

Despite the advantages, relationships with governmental and other public bodies have presented a surprising number of problems for academics.

In the field of international relations, the stresses of practitioner-academic cooperation have been set out by Christopher Hill and Pamela Beshoff in their edited work titled Two Worlds of International Relations: Academics, Practitioners and the Trade in Ideas (London: Routledge, 1994.) This work describes the "stand-off" between practitioners and academics and cites the warnings of Hans Morgenthau Jr that in order to do anything worthwhile, intellectuals needed to "retain their immunity from outside pressures … manifested in job security through tenure". According to Morgenthau, academics should monitor their own involvement in the

> academic-political complex in which the interests of government are inextricably intertwined with the interests of large groups of academics. These ties are both formal and informal, and the latter are the more dangerous to academic freedom, as they consist in the intellectuals' unconscious adaptation to imperceptible social and political pressures. (Cited on pp. ix and x.)

From considerable personal experience, I believe this warning needs to be taken seriously, though the stresses mentioned by Morgenthau vary greatly. Moreover, it is not only governments from which they may be expected. I have found that some non-governmental bodies are even more demanding on their academic consultants. (None of the examples alluded to below involve any organisation with which I have a current connection.)

Occasionally, a public body may give a grant which leaves the scholar to pursue his or her interests without impediment. My two first experiences – respectively with the UK Home Office and with the Policy Planning Staff of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office - were of this benign and extremely productive type. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office did not require me to sign the Official Secrets Act (nor did it supply me with Official Secrets) and did not even ask to see any publications before they appeared in print. Diplomats prepared their proposals emanating from my work in documents I was not permitted to see, I was left to produce and publish my academic writings without interference.

I now realise that I was exceptionally lucky. Normally the saying that "there is no such thing as a free lunch" applies.

First of all, governmental bodies and NGOs often look to consultants for results which are to their liking. It is sometimes implicit that a consultant who supplies unexpected or awkward findings will not be employed again and his or her work will not be published.

In one case, a public body based in Europe objected to a piece of writing by an African scholar on the ground that it mentioned that there was corruption in Nigeria (hardly a secret and hardly controversial, one might have thought). The public body feared it might endanger a lucrative Nigerian project it was carrying out. When the scholar responsible for the project refused to bow to the demand that the passage be deleted, his own contract was cancelled. In a similar way, it has been known for academics to receive direct instructions from a funding body about what opinions they are or are not permitted to express at a scholarly conference.

While some agencies pressure their academic consultants for questionable reasons, others face legal or political restrictions themselves. In the field of political finance, a body such as the World Bank needs to take care that any work it publishes on political funding falls within its legal remit. This applies not only to writing by consultants but by staff too.

Even where legal considerations do not apply, funding agencies have bowed to diplomatic pressure from foreign governments not to publish findings unflattering to those governments. Years ago, a set of country assessments of corruption in a part of the developing world sponsored by a public agency in North America reportedly were quashed for this reason. The sponsoring body feared that its aid programmes would be compromised by publication.

Members of RC20 and other academics have sometimes been asked to act as expert witnesses in court cases. Officially it is not allowed in many jurisdictions to put pressure on experts to alter their testimony. The duty of the expert witness is to the court itself and not to the party to the case which has employed him or her. In practice, this regulation has occasionally been honoured in the breach.

Second, sponsoring bodies will sometimes select an academic consultant whose views or ideology are perceived to coincide with their own. This has happened in the field of political finance, especially when a recommendation on a set of standards has been involved.

Third, there may be problems when an academic makes an assessment (for example of the effectiveness of a bureau or agency involved in the regulation or enforcement of political finance) and when the body that is subject of the assessment is itself the supplier of the contract. In such circumstances, it is not unknown for the funding body to dispute an unfavourable assessment on the ground of some technical inadequacy and to delay or to deny payment.

Academics employed as evaluators get to know what is expected of them – a hatchet job or praise – and to adapt their work accordingly.

Fourth, NGOs are fond of publicity-generating devices such as an index. In the field of anti-corruption, there are several rival indices – Transparency International produced a "Corruption Perception Index"; the "Opacity Index" comes from PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for the Study of Transparency and Sustainability and the Centre for Public Integrity entered the field with a "Public Integrity Index". A total of twenty measures of transparency are listed by Ann Bellver and Daniel Kaufmann of the World Bank in their August 2005 paper "Transparenting Transparency: Initial Empirics and Policy Applications".

The accuracy and value of these tools vary. The general problem is that the statistics employed may provide an easy fix that avoids the need for in-depth research and thus provides value-for-money for the sponsoring body. It is much harder, for instance, to assess the real extent of corruption in a country than the "perceptions" of some chosen experts.

Fifth, public bodies – especially international organisations – have been fascinated by the idea of setting broad standards. The Council of Europe, African Union, Organisation of American States and Transparency International all have formulated codes, and the World Bank has gone in the same direction. The UN anti-corruption convention also touches on political finance but only briefly because there was no agreement on some key points which, therefore, were fudged.

In my experience, such codes need to be treated with reserve. Some reflect ideological positions within the organisations which create them. Some constitute another quick fix, for it is simple and cheap to create such a code. In an effort to gloss over controversial points, some sets of standards are too vague to be meaningful. If accepted as international law, they give wide latitude for interpretation by judges.

I have been involved in two standard-making exercises and was struck by how quickly, casually and thoughtlessly standards were created. In one case I helped draft a set of standards with a colleague after dinner in a hotel bedroom and in a hurry to finish in time to go out for Saturday night drinks. It never occurred to me at the time how seriously the composition would be taken.

One of the main difficulties in constructing universally acceptable codes is the division between proponents of a statist approach, common in Europe and in Canada, and of libertarian models which are popular in some influential quarters in the United States. It is wrong, in my view, for proponents of either position to attempt to plant it as a compulsory world standard.

In any case, it may be questioned whether it is a suitable role for scholars to act as setters of political standards. Certainly, they may legitimately influence debates on standards by producing relevant empirical studies. But drawing up codes is arguably more suited to politicians and to constitutional lawyers than to political scientists.

Sixth, there is a temptation for desk officers of some NGOs unjustly to claim authorship of research carried out by academic consultants. Plagiarism is not regulated in the world of consultancy as it is in the academic sphere. Even in academe, senior academics may unjustifiably add their names to publications of juniors, who are too dependent on their favours to object.

Seventh, sponsoring bodies may impose conditions of confidentiality on its grantees. This may damage relationships and collegiality between academics who are part of a sponsored research project (especially if it is well paid) and those who are not.

Eighth, there is the vital matter of how far attention to real-world policy issues affects the choice of research topics. The fact that some of the most active members of RC20 have been involved as advisors or consultants to governments and to NGOs may go some way to explain the relative lack of attention to theories and scientific explanations. Some of the most important interpretative work on patterns of political finance has come from outside the Research committee from scholars such as Richard Katz and Peter Mair, who have written on the rise of the publicly-funded "cartel party"and from Mair's former student, Ingrid van Biezen.

As Susan Scarrow wrote in her excellent review titled "Political Finance in Comparative Perspective" (Annual Review of Political Science, 2007, 206), the field has been characterised since the 1970s by "Mounting Evidence, Lagging Theory".

In my opinion, Scarrow is correct in arguing that it is time to return to some of the broader questions explored by Heidenheimer in 1960s, for all of the problems that research into them involves. Among the questions, some of them mentioned by Scarrow, are the following:

- In which types of country is spending on politics relatively high or low?
- Are there any general trends in the level of spending?
- Is it true that modern methods of campaigning through mass media are costlier than old-fashioned doorstep techniques?
- What are the effects of spending on electoral outcomes? What are the effects – if any – of public funding of parties and campaigns?
- Does public funding lead to a system of "cartel" parties?
- Does it lead to a fall in party membership or political participation?
- Are there any general explanations of the introduction since the 1950s of systems of public funding in so many countries?
- Is there evidence of the effects of access or lack or access to money on the recruitment of candidates for public office? Does lack of access to money explain the relatively low proportion of female candidates?

## 4. THE FUTURE

*Is it possible to resolve the conflict between academic purity and policy relevance*
*?*

It may be argued that we should not attempt to marry the needs of scholarship and of policy. As Susan Scarrow implied in a comment on a draft of this paper, the ivory tower may turn out to have more practical value than a consciously policy-relevant approach.

Intellectuals need to be cautious about entanglement with the worlds of public policy and advocacy. But such entanglements are likely to become more tempting and more common. Clearly, the art of research in fields such as political finance is to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the sponsorship of international organisations, governments and NGOs without suffering too seriously from the pitfalls.

I do not believe that there is any sure way to avoid the inherent conflicts that have been outlined. Personal integrity on the part of the researcher is the best safeguard. However, there are a number of ways in which potential problems can be lessened, at least partially.

First, some experienced academics advise that colleagues should ration the amount of "policy relevant" contracts they undertake. This advice is easier for those employed by universities which give academic staff regular sabbatical leave. There are countries and universities whose staff members rely on payment from outside bodies to allow them to carry out any research at all.

Second, the saying that "forewarned is forearmed" is apt. There is a role for academic organisations such as the International Political Science Association and for its research committees to provide guidance to members about the way in which international organisations and major NGOs operate.

Third, there may be an institutional role for the International Political Science Association. If it is itself able to avoid the problems of sponsorship that have been summarised, it may have a valuable role as a partner in projects that involve links between individual scholars and major sponsoring organisations. If it is a participating partner, it may be able to represent and to protect the interests of scholars.

Fourth, the international community of political scientists should take advantage of the opportunities provided by new channels of communication. If these channel make it possible for scholars in different countries to "meet" each other more cheaply, this will increase their autonomy.

In my opinion, there is no substitute for face-to-face contact. Although it is costly to organise world congresses, they make it possible for political scientists who otherwise would never have met to get to know each other and to plan joint projects. However, the meetings between congresses need not always be face-to-face. The World Bank, the British Council and other bodies have set up equipment that permits scholars in different countries to conduct joint seminars via screens (similar to large television sets).

Apart from international round tables conducted through electronic channels, there is a potential role for systematic mentoring and tutorial arrangements conducted via the internet. It is now possible to arrange for a senior academic in one country to meet a more junior researcher from another country on a regular basis through their personal computers.

RC20 has provided a vital forum for some of the most active scholars of political finance and political corruption. In their own countries, academics specialising in these subjects were frequently on their own since they were pioneers in an undeveloped field. The work of RC20 meant that they were not isolated from all academic contact and this in itself was an invaluable function.

However, it is time to expand the work of the International Political Science Association's research committees, RC20 among them, so that they are not only the organisers of panels at world congresses and of round table meetings. If the RCs are able to work more closely with the executive and secretariat of the International Political Science Association, it should be possible to expand and deepen their work in novel ways and to do so economically.

**APPENDIX**

(a) <u>The Times (London) 25 April 2008</u>

## Herb Alexander

**US political scientist who made the financing of election campaigns an issue of both topical and scholarly importance**

Herb Alexander was doyen of scholars of the financing of election campaigns. He occupied a unique place on the political scene in the United States as the pioneer of a new sub-discipline of political science. His work had international influence.

Though he was concerned about the corruption that could stem from rising campaign costs, he was not a traditional American muckraker. He disapproved of lobby groups such as Common Cause that appeared to him too cynical about politics and too harsh in their attacks on political contributions from big business and special interests.

Though he was a lifelong Democrat, he felt that excessive legal controls, bans and spending limits were unnecessary and unworkable. Instead, he favoured a strategy of "floors not ceilings". It did not matter too much that richly endowed candidates and parties could spend a great deal; it mattered much more that poor ones had the minimum resources — the floor of basic funding — needed to put their case to the electors.

He pointed out that US politics, for all its costly razzmatazz, was still relatively cheap when compared with the huge sums spent on advertisements for soap and other household items. Rather than place a legal limit on spending (which would handicap political challengers and would be hard to enforce), he favoured tax incentives for donors of small amounts together with modest state funding. Giving a donation to a party or a candidate, he argued, was itself a healthy form of political participation.

Alexander's importance stemmed not only from his opinions but also from the persistence with which he researched and propagated the topic of money-in-politics throughout his working life. From 1960 until 1992 he published a study of the financing of each of the nine presidential elections. In the early years of his career, before effective federal election campaign finance laws were enacted in the 1970s, he and his staff at the Citizens' Research Foundation ceaselessly conducted interviews with politicians, fundraisers and donors to ferret out information, and collected press clippings giving details of political donations at federal, state and local levels. He recruited networks of scholars within the US to make studies of campaign costs in individual states; outside the US he commissioned studies of political finance in a large number of countries, many of which were virgin territory.

When Alexander started his researches in the 1950s, campaign finance was a fringe topic disregarded by most political scientists as too grubby and unsuitable for scientific analysis. By the time he died, its importance was almost universally recognised.

Herbert E. Alexander was born in Waterbury, Connecticut. He first conducted research on campaign contributions for his undergraduate dissertation at the University of North Carolina. He then received his doctorate in political science from Yale University in 1958 with a thesis on The Role of the Volunteer Political Fund Raiser: A Case Study in New York in 1952.

In lieu of a regular academic appointment he became the director of the Citizens' Research Foundation, founded in 1958 by the Vanderbilt family to research and inform the public about political finance.

In 1961 John F. Kennedy set up the President's Commission on Campaign Costs with Alexander as its executive director. The President gave the commission of leading academics and party officials the task of finding a solution to the problem of candidates' dependence on large campaign donations. It proposed rules to make political donations transparent, voluntary schemes to encourage big business to give bipartisan payments and tax incentives for small donations.

After Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon Johnson shelved most of the proposals. But they were to provide the basis for fundamental legislation enacted before and after the Watergate scandal of 1972. Alexander's book on financing the 1972 election was the most detailed of the 32-year series with its detailed research into the money laundering that characterised Richard Nixon's notorious Campaign to Re-elect the President (CREEP).

During the Watergate affair he was a consultant to the Senate Watergate investigations and to the US Comptroller-General. At the same time, his advocacy was key in the passage of the Federal Election Campaign Act, 1971, and in the creation of the Federal Election Commission.

Over the years Alexander secured financial support for the Citizens' Research Foundation from Ford, Carnegie, Pew, Joyce and other grantgiving institutions. It was not until 1978 that he took a regular professorship at the University of Southern California, and moved the Citizens' Research Foundation from Princeton to Los Angeles. Before this he had taught at various times at the universities of Pennsylvania, Princeton and Yale.

Alexander wrote and edited 20 books. These included Money in Politics (1972), Political Financing (1972), Campaign Money (1976), Political Finance (1979) and Financing Politics (1982). The contents were considerably more varied than the titles, though they give a realistic indication of his intense focus. He was constantly interviewed and cited by reporters and electoral administrators. He acted as an expert witness in political finance cases. He looked and acted the consummate Washington politico.

For 20 years Alexander served as chairman of the International Political Science Association's Research Committee on Political Finance and Political Corruption, editing two works comparing the American system of political finance with those of other countries. His infectious enthusiasm and willingness to help scholars from around the world had lasting results. In 2001 a *festshcrift* by 23 academics appeared in his honour.

Alexander bridged the worlds of academia and public life in a manner that often created difficulties for him. He had to be an entrepreneur as well as a scholar. Yet, it was precisely his resolute individualism and determination to create a new field of study that made his work so significant. Though never a member of the academic Establishment, he received many honours after his retirement in 1998 from the University of Southern California.

His wife, Nancy, died in 2000. He is survived by three sons and by his companion, Bobbie.

**Herbert E. Alexander, political scientist, was born on December 21, 1927. He died on April 3, 2008, aged 80**

(b) Tribute to appear in PS

## Herbert E. Alexander

Herbert E. Alexander, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Southern California (USC), died of cancer on April 3, 2008 at the age of eighty. For forty years, Alexander was director of the Citizens' Research Foundation (CRF), a nonprofit organization devoted exclusively to studying and informing the public about political finance. CRF was founded in 1958, the same year Alexander received his Ph.D. in political science from Yale. After twenty years as an independent organization based in Princeton, New Jersey, CRF moved to and became part of USC in 1978, where it stayed until Alexander's retirement in 1998.

In 1961-1962, Alexander took a leave from CRF to serve as executive director of the President's Commission on Campaign Costs under President John F. Kennedy and served subsequently as consultant to President Kennedy on legislation based on the commission's report. This was the first of many times he was a consultant to governments at all levels in the U.S. and abroad. In 1996, he was awarded the Samuel J. Eldersveld Career Achievement Award by the Political Organizations and Parties Section of the American Political Science Association, in honor of his lifetime contributions to the field. In 2004, he received the Annual Award from the Council of Government Ethics Laws – the professional organization for campaign finance and government ethics officials in the U.S. and Canada.

After retirement, Alexander moved to Silver Spring, Maryland where he remained professionally active. He was predeceased by his wife Nancy G. Alexander and granddaughter Victoria Alexander. He is survived by three sons and their wives, Michael (Sandra) of East Windsor, New Jersey; Andrew (Lisa) of Toronto, Canada; and Kenneth (Susan) of Olney, Maryland; five grandchildren; and his companion, Barbara B. Seidel.

Professional Mark

Herb Alexander was often described as the "dean" of political finance scholarship in the United States and internationally. That description barely does him justice. For years he worked virtually alone. He was not only the dean but almost the whole faculty defining the field in which many of us now labor.

Many political scientists know Alexander's signature books – the quadrennial series that began with *Financing the 1960 Election*, and continued with Herb as principal author through *Financing the 1992 Election*. As important as these books are, they represent a small part of Alexander's full output. Shortly before he died, Herb contributed a library of all of his published writings to The Campaign Finance Institute, a research institute affiliated with The George Washington University that I have been privileged to run. As we took in the library, it quickly became clear to me that even though I had consulted and owned much of his work for more than thirty years, I in fact knew less than half of the whole. The full collection contained twenty books and more than 375 articles, papers, speeches and other finished writings.

The quadrennial *Financing* series built on painstaking methods he learned from his teacher, Alexander Heard, and from the work of Louise Overacker, whose original index cards of campaign finance data were later stored in the CRF offices. Much of the research was carried out before effective disclosure laws. According to CRF's long time assistant director, Gloria Cornette: "Dr. Alexander had to rely on the extensive list of contacts he developed as well as on his own persistence to uncover the information he needed to generate his studies. He attended every Democratic and Republican National Convention from 1960 to 1992, where he met with political party officials and campaign operatives as well as political fund raisers and donors, from whom he drew the information that informed his narratives." What is most remarkable is that he got these people to give not merely generalities, but details with numbers that allow meaningful comparisons across campaigns and years. His information-gathering methods fell into disuse in the years after computerized disclosure. That is unfortunate, because we will need them again if (as expected) there is an increase in election-related spending by organizations that fall outside the law's reporting requirements.

Much of Herb's additional work can best be described as policy analysis, looking at the effects of federal, state and local campaign finance laws in the U.S. and other countries on the institutions of democracy. The analyses were often coupled with recommendations. The recommendations shifted in their specifics over the years as laws changed, but maintained a fundamental consistency on the big issues. In *Financing the 1960 Election* Herb wrote about the value of encouraging "a vast expansion in the numbers of small contributors. This does not exclude a policy of partial subsidies", such as a tax credit. A sound policy, he argued, should "recognize that political contributions constitute a reputable form of public service, and would be in accord with the principle that every public spirited citizen who has a party preference should contribute financially, in moderate amounts, to the political party of his choice."

Two decades later, the same principles led him to a position that maintains currency in the political arena. "Rethinking reform," he wrote in a 1984 volume I edited, "leads to the ideal concept of floors without ceilings: a system that would provide candidates with partial public funding but not expenditure limits." He supported limits on contributions to candidates – Herb was not a libertarian, though he was concerned that the limits were too low for seed money. Yet he also favored removing the limits on contributions to the political parties, as well as the limits on party expenditures. (See his contribution to *Money and Politics in the United States: Financing Elections in the 1980s.*) Consistent with these positions, Herb two decades later opposed the McCain-Feingold law's ban on political party soft money. "Elections are improved by well-financed candidates and parties able to wage competitive campaigns, not by stifling political dialogue," he wrote in the *Election Law Journal* in 2003.

In all cases, whatever the details, Herb was concerned simultaneously about participation, transparency and corruption. This led him to disagree with many of his colleagues on specific issues, but such disagreements were inevitable. It is a lot easier to resolve balancing problems if you are willing to satisfy only two (any two) of the three goals he juggled. The hard policy choices come when you try to keep all three in play at once. He did so, and the rest of us in the field learned from that effort, even if some of us have come to different conclusions on some particulars.

Alexander's comparative work is also worthy of note. From 1973 to 1994 he was chair of the Research Committee on Political Finance and Political Corruption of the International Political Science Association. He edited two volumes of comparative political finance during those years, served as a frequent election observer, and as a consultant to the U.S. Agency for International Development. In 2001, twenty-three scholars contributed to *Foundations for Democracy: Approaches to Comparative Political Finance* a series of essays written in his honor. In the editor's preface to that volume, Karl-Heinz Nassmacher wrote that Alexander "has been the most eminent and prolific author on political finance in the U.S. for no less than four decades and the cornerstone of international scholarship in the field since the 1970s." Those sentiments were echoed shortly after his death by political scientists Rei Shiratori of Japan, Michael Pinto-Duschinsky of Great Britain and Menachem Hofnung of Israel, as well as by many others within the U.S.

In recognition of Herbert Alexander's contributions to the field, The Campaign Finance Institute will host a reception in his honor at the 2008 annual meeting of American Political Science Association. CFI will also make his library available to scholars and hopes to post many of his writings on a dedicated page on the CFI website.

Eulogy by Kent Cooper

We close this tribute by reproducing extended excerpts from the eulogy delivered at Herb's funeral by Kent Cooper, who was for twenty years chief of the

Public Records division at the Federal Election Commission and later a co-founder of *Political Money Line*:

*"I have been asked to say a few words about Herb's professional career. Needless to say I am at a disadvantage. It is hard to say a few words about someone who wrote over twenty books and produced more than 375 articles, speeches and testimony during his fifty year professional career.*

*"In fact he wrote so much, he crafted an entirely new field of study - that of political finance. When I first met Herb in 1973 I was already benefiting from the field he helped create. For the next 35 years I worked in that field and enjoyed his friendship, his counsel, and his valuable analysis of money in politics.*

*"But it was not easy for him; it took a lot of painstakingly methodical and tedious work. From working as a student with Alexander Heard, to his going over the 3x5 contributor cards complied by Louise Overacker, he learned to dig for details and document the trends and patterns of financing elections. Early on he established a set of standards and measurements to chart the role of money in politics consistently.*

*"Even the method and topic of his Yale doctoral dissertation, 'The Role of the Volunteer Political Fund Raiser: A Case Study in New York in 1952,' is just as relevant today, although it might be called 'New York bundling.' It named names and brought life to black and white financial figures.*

*"Herb's role as executive Director of President John F. Kennedy's Commission on Campaign Costs provided a unique opportunity to meet and hear the top political leadership of the national political system. The Commission worked for six months and produced a core report some of whose key recommendations were adopted over time….*

*"From then on Herb dedicated his life to that effort – heading 'a private, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to the study of significant aspects of contemporary political finance.'*

*"And that meant almost every waking moment. It included constantly making notes, tearing out articles, and quickly jotting down new facts and figures to add to the historical record or trend analysis of political spending. And that might have been in the midst of almost anything else – such as a conversation, dinner, or on a phone call.*

*"In his 1976 book he acknowledged 'the encouragement and forbearance of my wife Nancy, and the good cheers of my children Michael, Andrew and Kenneth.' Forbearance is probably the key word here. How kids can grow up around a dinner table talking of fat cats, independent expenditures, soft money, and bundling, is beyond me (even though I inflicted similar pain on my sons). However they survived and appear to be relatively normal.*

*"Herb also tried to say thank you using the dedications in his own books – the ultimate product. His* Financing the 1960 Election*, the first of his books on the presidential races, was dedicated 'To my wife Nancy, whose devotion to my work is*

*exceeded only by her devotion to her family.'  And the three editions of his college guide,* Financing Politics, *are dedicated 'To Nancy, Michael, Andrew and Kenneth.'*

*"I think the driving dynamic inside Herb was that he had toiled by himself and dug for and found new information that no one else had – and he wanted to get it out to the public.*

*"That was hard. Financial figures are not the easiest to understand or write about. One usually loses the reader with phrases like, 'Total individual contributions, less un-itemized, and excluding transfers and loans, equals itemized contributions for the period, excluding debts owed.'*

*"Herb was well aware of this and received valuable guidance from Teddy White. Herb's 1984 book was dedicated:  'To the memory of Theodore H. White, the unexcelled storyteller of American Politics, and for 16 years a dedicated trustee of the Citizens' Research Foundation.'*

*"Herb also knew that the media was a valuable and necessary part of educating the public. Over the years he worked with reporters and regularly wrote op-ed articles and background pieces about money in politics.*

*"He also used news articles to help build the base of knowledge. In many cases politicians and party leaders were not forthcoming with inside information on their finances, and reporters had to dig them out with interviews.  Herb built all this into his books. For example, his book on the 1976 election was his longest volume and included 1,455 footnotes, many from news articles and interviews.*

*"Herb's books and publications have always been and still are of value to historians, political scientists, candidates, politicians, legislators, lawyers, and election practitioners.*

*"In the 1970's and 80's as more states established campaign finance and ethics commissions, early administrators, commissioners and staff used Herb's books to understand why they were created and what their purpose should be. Herb continued to help state and local agencies, especially New Jersey, New York City, Illinois and California, and Maryland. In 2004 the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws awarded him its highest honor.*

*"Of course, some people had different points of view from Herb, and some were very strong personalities – but Herb was equally strong-minded. And it didn't matter which party you were from, what side of Capitol Hill you were on, he would give you his straight opinion.*

*"His presence also made politicians, fundraisers and others think twice about exaggerating or altering the facts. If they were making a speech or presentation that mentioned their best points and maybe omitted a few problem areas, they knew Herb would ask a question to set the record straight in the end – and also plug his latest book. Not that campaign finance books ever made much money.*

*"Even presidential treasurers and fund raising chairmen relied on him for his information. They would provide him inside data and he would write it up three years later, along with every other campaign. After the election he would hold a forum to talk over what really happened and what changes might be recommended.*

*"Students also benefited from Herb's efforts; countless numbers are now carrying on his research and analysis. In 2002, the University of Southern California awarded him its Distinguished Emeritus Award for his 20 year tenure at the university and 'his seminal scholarship, dedication to teaching and leadership in the academic community.'*

*"And he did all that without a computer. Herb liked the old joke about campaign finance reporting. He claimed he would do a sequel to Erica Jong's book,* Fear of Flying*, but would call it* 'Fear of Filing'. *Perhaps he should have called it* 'Fear of the Computer.*'*

*"Actually Gloria Cornette, the assistant director of the Citizens' Research Foundation, was his computer. He thanked her in every book, since she was the only one who could organize his work and get him to a deadline on time. How she did it I don't know. Even this weekend she is seeing to every detail and final arrangement.*

*"Herbert E. Alexander was my mentor and my friend. I will miss him very much and I think others in the field will long remember his contributions to our society and its democratic process. To his sons and their families, and Bobbie, our prayers are with you."*

*"Herb stayed interested in political money his entire life. Two months ago we were talking about the 2008 presidential race. He was current on each morning's news and breaking stories. I keep expecting a call from him, asking for a copy of Clinton's tax returns or Obama's Rezko donations, or McCain's bank loan papers. He never stopped trying to piece together the puzzle of money in politics."*

Many of us would second Kent Cooper's remarks.

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