

Historical Infrastructure Threatened

Historians are facing threats to the government infrastructure that sustains their work, as reflected in recent bureaucratic maneuvers over Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76.

The Circular outlines the Reagan Administration's desire to contract out services that are not considered an inherent part of government operations. The administration asserts that the private sector can perform many routine tasks more efficiently than public servants, and that transferring these services to private enterprise will save taxpayers money.

Included in the list of "commercial activities" mentioned as candidates for contracting out are "library services and facility operation" and "audiovisual facility management and operation." During a meeting held March 3 to discuss the Circular, historians and their representatives objected to the inclusion of these items on the list.

Page Putnam Miller, Director of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, David K. Allison, a representative of the Society for History in the Federal Government, and Representative Major R. Owens (D-N.Y.) expressed fears concerning the loss of the government's institutional memory. Contracting out an agency library, they asserted, might adversely affect historically valuable collections.

"The penalty imposed on the contractor for destroying infrequently requested items, whatever their permanent record value, would be lower than the reward in increased profits," Allison argued. "It will not be saving money, it will be buying amnesia."

Miller contended that "staying close to primary sources is crucial for historians." She testified that contracting out libraries might excise important items from the continuing process of historical analysis.

Continued on page 4

THE SEASON OF APPLIED HISTORY: CHALLENGING THE FRUSTRATIONS

By James M. Banner, Jr.
*Scholar-in-Residence, Association of
American Colleges*

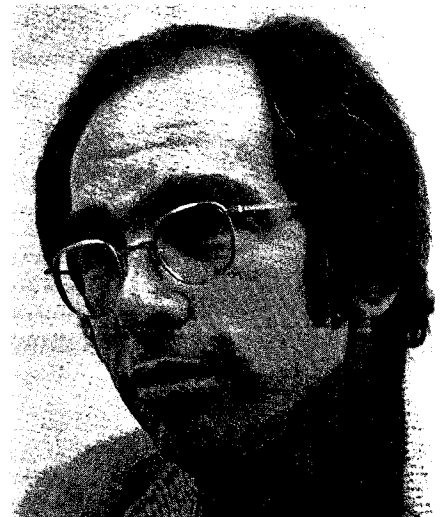
This is the season of applied history. We have seen nothing quite like it before. Classic claims for the utility and applicability of historical knowledge always rested on broad assumptions of history's capacity to offer perspective, causal explanation, and liberation from the thrall of the past. Yet these claims always defied specificity and were meant as much to convey an impression of the superior learning and wisdom of those who uttered them as to convince those to whom they were addressed.

Recently, these arguments have gone into eclipse, having been challenged, though not supplanted, by claims about utility of a different order. The reasons are more cultural and professional than intellectual, more external than internal to the direction of historical research. Since the Second World War, many historians, believing themselves ineffectual in comparison with economists, sociologists, psychologists, and other scientists in providing useful knowledge, have purposefully sought ways—through new methods and research interests—to contribute to the understanding of contemporary public issues and to the development of public policies. More recently, the career difficulties of younger historians, their sights originally set on academic berths, have led many—seasoned and fledgling historians alike—to seek new uses for venerable analytical skills in the field of "public," or "applied," history.

Forces external to formal historical study have been even more influential. Policies pursued on grounds devoid of historical understanding and often barren of substantiating evidence, especially in connection with the war in Vietnam, roused many historians to try to set the past record straight for policy application.

Direct changes in the administration of laws, such as required archaeological and environmental impact statements, encouraged trained historians to involve themselves in the implementation of policies lest the inexpert do so. Above all, the implacable demands of broad social issues—race, women's rights, incarceration—have involved professional historians as chroniclers and analysts in numbers as few past eras had ever done.

As a result, large and somewhat novel claims for the utility of history are now heard; and training, publications, and organizations for applied history are on the rise. Not surprisingly, efforts to evaluate the contributions of history to public issues and to the formulation of public policy are following closely behind. And from some of the published results of these efforts, one is forced to conclude that differing intellectual styles, professional expectations and responsibilities, and means of presenting facts and argu-



James M. Banner, Jr.

Continued on page 2

CALL FOR PAPERS

1984 Los Angeles Meeting

The Sixth Annual Conference on Public History will be held next year in Los Angeles from Friday, April 6, to Sunday, April 8. This will coincide with the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians from April 4 to April 7 at the Biltmore Hotel.

Co-chairs Barbara Howe and John Bloom have worked with the 1984 OAH Program Committee to select several sessions that will be of interest to members of the OAH and NCPH. These sessions will be held from April 5-7. Several workshops will focus on issues of concern to both groups, such as promotion and tenure for public historians, the use of adjunct faculty, a code of ethics, and curriculum planning.

Howe and Bloom are seeking proposals for the sessions sponsored by the NCPH, to be held Friday afternoon, Saturday morning and afternoon, and Sunday morning, with the largest number on Saturday afternoon. They are soliciting proposals that address the public historian's role in cultural resource management, the role of ethnic and minority groups as a focus for public historians' concerns, public historians' use of the urban environment as a laboratory or focus of study, the public historian in the media (historians and the making of documentary films for television and movies, for example), introducing students to careers in public history (how to apply for federal jobs, where to find jobs, etc.) and specific concerns of historians in local, state, and federal governments (job

classifications, ethics on the job, etc.).

If you are interested in submitting a proposal for an individual paper or complete session, send a one to two page prospectus, outlining your paper or session and the qualifications of the participants to Barbara Howe, Department of History, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26506 (phone: 304/293-2421) and John Bloom, Holt-Atherton Center for Western Studies, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA 95211 (phone: 209/946-2404). As co-chairs of the 1984 program committee for the NCPH, each needs to receive a copy of the proposal. *The deadline for submission of proposals is September 15.* Applicants will be notified of the committee's decision by approximately October 15. Please note that all participants in the program will have to register for either the NCPH meeting or the joint OAH/NCPH meeting.

SEASON *continued*

ments bar the way to a warmer reception of historical knowledge among policymakers.

In reports of discussions between historians and those responsible for policy, one learns of frustrations on both sides. Historians insist on remaining faithful to the complexity of data and explanation and refuse to confine their perspective, as policymakers wish them to do, to a brief period of the immediate past. Historians consider themselves to be serving the truth and not a client, whether it be the state, a union, or an interest group. They resist limits—such as those imposed by policy research—on their freedom to determine the subjects they would study. Working from known surviving sources, they cannot satisfy policymakers about the completeness of the data from which they try to draw a representative sample. That is to say, their intentions, their commitments, and their methods fail to meet the purportedly superior tests of the policy sciences.

As for the policymakers, they often lack even the basic sense of what solid historical inquiry requires, or ought to require, of them. They bring to their policy formulations erroneous facts and outmoded interpretations about the past. The historians' sense of contingency is not vouchsafed to them, nor are they capable of finding in the historical record evidence of multiple alternatives which might release them from the straitjackets

of ideology, commitment, or politics. Perhaps worst of all, they possess a poor sense of historical dynamics and find it difficult to conceive of the unintended and unforeseeable consequences of any "planned" action.

What is to be done to reduce frustrations on both sides and to advance the contributions of historical study to policy formation?

In my view, historians concerned about the public application of their knowledge should now initiate three endeavors.

The first should be a comprehensive exploration of the arguments for, and the strengths and weaknesses of, history utilized for other than its classic ends of illumination and understanding. The examination should be historical as well as theoretical and should be thoroughly grounded in, but not wedded to, the analysis of historical thought offered by recent students of the logic and structure of historical argument. Such an exploration can probably be successfully undertaken only by one person and cannot be the product of a group of people whose work is governed by the same ends but is only loosely integrated. Such a study will have to assess such issues as what sort of arguments can be put forth as useful historical assertions; how historical knowledge and argument can be integrated with policy debate; what rhetorical approaches are most persuasive in policy argument; how a body of knowledge about the utilization of history might be compiled and evaluated; and what might compose a canon of criticism for applied history.

The second undertaking ought to be a guide or series of guides about how to carry out various forms of applied history and how to approach the ethical and professional issues that arise in doing so. This will take much effort, the diversity of approach and intention of applied history being much greater than traditional historical scholarship. Whereas useful lesson books in text verification, citation form, and editorial apparatus have long existed, no authoritative texts take up such matters as the preparation of historical impact statements or the techniques essential to affecting the formation of social policy.

Finally, historians who venture to influence social and other policy must accept the need to address their work to policymakers rather than to fellow historians. To maintain a teacherly or ideological posture or to resist altering the essay form will only confirm the assumption of many policymakers that history is inap-

continued on page 3

SYLLABUS EXCHANGE

The following new syllabi are available.

- History and Public Policy
Howard Holter
California State University
Dominguez Hills
- Public History I
John Bodnar
Indiana University

Barbara Howe, who coordinates the exchange, encourages people to continue to send in syllabi—particularly to help anyone now planning for fall classes. Those who have already contributed and have made changes in their syllabus should send a replacement. Syllabi submitted for the exchange should be typed or mimeographed and sent to Howe at West Virginia University, Morgantown.

TEACHING NEWSLETTER MOVES TO WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

Barbara Howe will be the new editor of the *Teaching Public History Newsletter*. The newsletter will be published from the public history option in the Department of History at West Virginia University for the next year. The NCPH Board of Directors decided to initiate this proposal at its May meeting and also agreed to initiate an annual subscription fee for the newsletter, which will be published in September, December, and April. The fee will be \$5. Checks should be made payable to the National Council on Public History and sent to Ted Karamanski, Department of History, Loyola University, Water Tower Campus, 820 North

Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611.

Members of the Curriculum and Training Committee of the National Council, who will also be working with the newsletter, see this revival of the newsletter as a way to exchange ideas on course development in public history and to address issues such as the use of interns, the place of public history courses in the curriculum of a history department, and the role of the introductory course in public history. Suggestions for articles and contributions are welcomed and should be sent to Howe, Department of History, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26506.

NCPH NEWS AND REPORTS FROM THE FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING AT WATERLOO, CANADA

*Executive Director Philip Cantelon reported on 1982-83 activities during the annual meeting at the University of Waterloo. Over the past year, subscriptions to *The Public Historian* continued to rise, and difficulties with the subscription list began to subside. Institutional sponsors to the Council include the first patron, Citibank, N.A. Other corporations represented are the Coca-Cola Company, Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Sterling Drug Inc., Union Electric Company, and Wells Fargo Bank. The bibliography on public history, managed through to completion by David Trask and Robert Pomeroy, will be published by Greenwood Press this fall. In conjunction with the Organization of American Historians, NCPH has formed a committee to bring a public history facet to the celebration of the bicentennial of the Constitution. Deborah Gardner, Heather Huyck, Jerry George, and Philip Cantelon will participate in the project, entitled "The Culture of Constitutionalism."*

Last year NCPH made a grant for public history course and curriculum development to Camden College of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University. A Master of Arts in Public History program has received university approval. Plans call for implementing the program in 1984 and recruiting for two full-time tenure track positions.

During the past year, the executive committee hired Anna Nelson to work on a report outlining possible projects for future NCPH attention. While pointing out that the Council had accomplished much with volunteer time and energy, the re-

port concluded that "no further progress can be made . . . unless [the National Council] can raise the money for a paid staff member," and proposed several ways to proceed.

The report suggested that the Council "turn the major part of its attention to developing a greater public interest in the use of historians and history" and spend less time on training programs. Also, the Council should embark on cooperative projects with the OAH, AHA, and AASLH to benefit public history.

The report suggested the development of a five-year plan that would evaluate the Council's identity, formulate plans for specific projects, and lead to the hiring of a program officer. Through its leadership, Nelson concluded, the National Council could (1) act as a catalyst in organizing projects to ensure a public history representation; (2) provide partial financial support through planning grants, matching funds, or small grants; (3) insure quality standards of history; (4) and assure the dissemination of public history projects.

*At the annual meeting of the Board of Directors, John Bloom and Barbara Howe reported on program planning for the 1984 meeting with the OAH in Los Angeles. Continuation of the *Teaching Public History Newsletter* was discussed. Howe, of West Virginia University, presented a plan to continue issuing this publication through the support of that university; the board approved the proposal. The board also accepted an invitation from Arizona State University to host the 1985 annual meeting in conjunction with the university's centennial.*

Following the presentation of the report of the nominating committee, the board voted the following new members to the board and the Executive Committee. *Board of Directors.* Four year terms: Deborah Gardner, New York Stock Exchange; Pat Harahan, U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.; Barbara Howe, West Virginia University; Paul Mattingly, New York University; Pat Melvin, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; Lawrence Meriage, Cities Service Co., Tulsa; Michael Scardaville, University of South Carolina; Michael Schene, National Park Service, Denver. Two year term: Karen Smith, Salt River Project, Phoenix. One year term: Donna Munger, Pennsylvania Historical Commission.

Executive Committee: Chair, Larry Tise, Pennsylvania Historical Commission; Vice Chair, Jack Holl, Department of Energy, Washington, D.C.; Treasurer, Ted Karamanski, Loyola University of Chicago; Secretary, Noel J. Stowe, Arizona State University; Board representative, three year term, Michael Scardaville; Board representative, two year term, Pat Melvin. At the conclusion of its meeting, the board extended a warm vote of thanks to outgoing Chair Wesley Johnson, Secretary Suellen Hoy, and Treasurer Robert Pomeroy for their outstanding, dedicated service.

SEASON *continued*

plicable to their work. Historians should at least experiment with new modes of presentation in order to meet policymakers' insistence upon relevance, clarity of information, and parsimony. There is every reason to think that history can both retain its integrity and increase its utility in doing so.

*This article is adapted from a longer review-essay that appeared in *History and Theory, Volume 21 (1982), Number 3 (October).**

Secretariat for NCPH

The National Council has issued a call for bids to establish a secretariat. Research organizations, public agencies, private institutions, universities, and other private firms or public bodies are invited to submit proposals to house an NCPH secretariat for three years, with the possibility of a three year renewal. Proposals, due November 15, should be sent to Executive Director Philip Cantelon, Drawer 730, Germantown, MD 20874. Those making proposals should plan to make a formal presentation to the Board of Directors at its December meeting in San Francisco.



© 1983 Field Enterprises, Inc. Courtesy of Field Newspaper Syndicate

Stock Exchange Issues History

The history of the New York Stock Exchange is outlined in Deborah S. Gardner's *Marketplace: A Brief History of the New York Stock Exchange*, the first publication of its type published by the Exchange for a general audience.

Gardner, the Exchange's archivist, traces the evolution of the "world's foremost securities market" from its origins in the late eighteenth century to today's modern, computerized trading establishment. *Marketplace* chronicles the Exchange's history through the era of the young republic, the industrial expansion of the Civil War and the Gilded Age, the challenges of international finance in the early twentieth century, and the demands of today's expanding securities market. The study highlights the Exchange's role in the financial and industrial growth of the nation and the contributions of members who helped shape the American securities market.

Gardner describes *Marketplace's* themes as "the rapidly changing use of technology in the trading process over the years, the consistency of our market operations, and the strong link between the Exchange and the city, state, and nation."

Gardner hopes that *Marketplace* will emphasize the importance of the Exchange's archives. "We are not in the business of nostalgia," she explained. "In three years, we have become an important source of information about policies and decisions that affect current operations. We have helped almost every department of the Exchange as well as numerous outside researchers, from genealogists to law firms, scholars, and the media."

"History Goes Public"

This slide-tape presentation is the perfect introduction to public history for general classroom use. It covers the wide variety of tasks, jobs, and careers that public historians are involved in, briefly summarizes the "history" of public history, and encourages students to look beyond teaching as a possible route to professional satisfaction.

For information and rental or purchase arrangements, contact Barbara Howe, Department of History, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26505.

History Goes Public is available in one carousel with an accompanying cassette tape. The cassette must be used with a synchronizer, either built into the slide projector or attached to it and a tape recorder. The cassette is simple to use and inexpensive to rent or purchase. Rental: \$45. Purchase: \$150.

Archives Guidelines

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference announces the publication of *Guidelines for Archives and Manuscript Repositories*. This nineteen-page booklet informs the novice about what an archivist does and should do, and where the books and people can be found to provide further assistance. The *Guidelines* also may serve to remind seasoned archivists of their many responsibilities. For a copy, send \$2 to MARAC, Laura Grotzinger, 1509 Country Lane, West Trenton, NJ 06821.

NCPH Newsletter
3914 Harrison Street, NW
Washington, DC 20015

Arizona State University
Department of History
Tempe, AZ 85287

Lewis University Canal Archives

The Illinois Canal Society has given an extensive collection of Illinois and Michigan Canal materials to Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois. The collection consists of maps, early documents and letters, prints and photographs, oral history tapes, and a number of secondary sources relating to Illinois canals. The collection forms the basis of the Lewis University Canal Archives. The Society wants the collection to be as available to the public as possible. The collection is an invaluable asset in understanding nineteenth century development and continuing waterway usage in Illinois.

1986 Annual Meeting

The NCPH Board invites proposals to host the 1986 annual meeting from institutions located along the East Coast. Inquiries and proposals should be sent to Executive Director Philip Cantelon, Drawer 730, Germantown, MD 20874.

INFRASTRUCTURE *continued*

Owens, a professional librarian, worried over the administration's opinion of librarians. "Library service is a custom-made service more similar to policy-making or speech-writing than to security or janitorial services," he remarked.

Edward D. Berkowitz
George Washington University

The Newsletter of the National Council on Public History is published four times each year. Copy for inclusion in the Newsletter should be sent to the NCPH Newsletter, Graduate Program in Public History, Department of History, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287. Material for the summer issue should be received by early August.



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 1
Tempe, Arizona