



IN MEMORIAM

J. Austin Ranney
Professor Emeritus of Political Science
Berkeley
1920 — 2006

J. Austin Ranney, the eminent political scientist and leading authority on political parties and elections, died peacefully at his home in Berkeley on July 24, 2006. He was 85 years old and for a number of years had been battling the debilitating effects of congestive heart failure and diabetes. Ranney's doctoral dissertation, "The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government" (1954), and his Jefferson Lecture at Berkeley, "Curing the Mischiefs of Faction" (1973), are major explorations of the role that parties play in the overall scheme of the American political system. The broad- gauged view adopted by these studies, theoretically informed but also rigorously disciplined by wide- ranging empirical study, was typical of Ranney's style of work, which extended to important contributions on democracy and the party system, referendums, presidential primaries, the measuring of party competition, the impact of television on elections, and the recruitment of candidates for public office, among other topics.

In the discipline of political science, Ranney's benign, constructive influence can be found nearly everywhere from the time he received his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1948 right up to his retirement from the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley, in 1991, and beyond. At one time or another he was president of the American Political Science Association, book review editor, then managing editor of the American Political Science Review, program chairman for the association's annual meeting, member of the association's council and its executive committee, and chairman of the Task Force on the Future of the Association. Little wonder that he was among the first recipients of the association's Frank Goodnow Award for service to the profession. For many years Ranney was also a major influence on the work of the Social Science Research Council, serving as chairman of its Committee on Governmental and Legal Processes and member of the board of directors and its executive committee. His pioneering work on the selection of parliamentary candidates in Britain, recorded in *Pathways to Parliament* (1965), led to his election as a corresponding member of the British Academy, and he was an officer of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, of the International Political Science Association, and of Pi Sigma Alpha, the political science fraternity. Two of the universities from which he graduated, Northwestern University (B.A., 1941; Doctor of Laws, 1995) and Yale (Ph.D., 1948; Doctor of Social Sciences, 1985), awarded him honorary degrees, as did the State University of New York, Cortland (Doctor of Laws, 1986), located at his birthplace. He also earned an M.A. (1943) from the University of Oregon and was awarded the Wilbur Cross medal of Yale University for outstanding professional achievement by an alumnus of the graduate school. He was a Guggenheim Fellow and later served on the Guggenheim Foundation's Educational Advisory Board, and was a fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.

Ranney's teaching career included professorships at the University of Illinois (1947-63), the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1963-76), and the University of California, Berkeley (from 1986), where he was a notably successful chairman of the Department of Political Science. He also served on the senior staff of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, D.C. from 1975 to 1985 and on the editorial board of the

AEI journal Public Opinion. He visited on the faculties of Yale, Georgetown University, and the University of California, Davis.

Ranney, a loyal unhyphenated Democrat, was frequently called upon by his party. He was active in the Humphrey campaign of 1968 and served subsequently on the party's commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection (the McGovern- Fraser Commission). His other public service included a long term as trustee of the Institute for American Universities of Aix- en- Provence, chairmanship of the Governor's Commission on Registration and Voting Participation in Wisconsin, membership in the Presidential-Congressional Commission on the Political Activity of Government Employees, and service as an official observer of referendums in the Trust Territories of the Pacific. This last experience yielded a book, *Democracy in the Islands* (1985), written with Howard Penniman. In retirement he presided over the University of California, Berkeley's Committee on Protection of Human Subjects and served on the board of directors of the Cal Retirement Center.

J. Austin Ranney was born September 23, 1920, in Cortland, New York. At an early age he moved with his family to Corona, in southern California, where he grew up doing chores at the family creamery. A debate star in high school, he was offered a debate scholarship to attend Northwestern University as an undergraduate. After his M.A. year at the University of Oregon, he did graduate work at Yale. While at Yale, Ranney did some teaching at Wesleyan University nearby and came under the influence of E. E. Schattschneider, then the leading student of political parties in the profession. Ranney enjoyed saying that he was the Wesleyan department's first and only Ph.D.

While he discovered his lifelong intellectual agenda at that time, Ranney never subscribed to Schattschneider's strong majoritarian views. His early contributions to the literature were respectful, but highly skeptical of the famous American Political Science Association report, *Toward a More Responsible Two- Party System* (1950), which expressed many of his mentor's ideas. Ranney, a student at Northwestern of the social psychologist Angus Campbell, had already assimilated a sociologically grounded perspective that undergirded his critique of the rather mechanical assumptions about human behavior to be found in the report.

Ranney was widely renowned as a mentor and prized as a colleague. His gifted Ph.D. student (at Wisconsin) Douglas Rae (now a Yale professor), pointed out that to a remarkable degree "Austin understood the interface between ideas and empirics." His agreeable self- deprecating good humor drew students to him wherever he taught, and his acute analytical sensibilities, cheerfully and undogmatically applied to their work, invariably improved their minds with a minimum of pain. He was a man of eclectic enthusiasms that he loved to share with friends, embracing the local football teams, collegiate and professional, wine, good music and Civil War history, where his deep expertise led him briefly to appear on a national quiz show. It gratified Austin that in his lifetime he saw the rehabilitation of U. S. Grant's reputation as a Civil War general.

Ranney was first married to the late Elizabeth MacKay, with whom he had four sons, Jay, Douglas, and Gordon, all of Madison, Wisconsin, and David, of Cupertino, California, who survive him along with three granddaughters. His second marriage, in 1976, was to Nancy Boland Edgerton, who, with her sons Scott, of Molalla, Oregon, and Bruce, of Reston, Virginia, also survives him, as does his sister, Harriet Watkins, of La Junta, Colorado.

Nelson W. Polsby
Raymond E. Wolfinger