

THE SCRANTON PAPERS*

GEORGE D. WOLF

FOR too long now, Pennsylvania historians have taken too seriously Sir Walter Raleigh's admonition that "Whosoever in writing a modern history shall follow truth too near the heels, it may happily strike out his teeth."¹ The result, as S. K. Stevens pointed out in his litigious *Pennsylvania: Birthplace of a Nation*, has been avoidance of "the more recent history of the state" and, consequently, "serious gaps in the structure of Pennsylvania historiography."² The colonial and post-Revolutionary history of the Commonwealth, my own first area of concern, has received more than its share of the attention of the scholars of Pennsylvania. To use an old political cliché, "it's time for a change."

If history is indeed "the witness of the times," as Cicero wrote in the century before Christ, then Pennsylvania historians, too, must become more contemporary in their scholarly efforts.³ The simple fact of the matter is that we are living in an age in which the focus is more and more on contemporary history.

The heightened interest in contemporary history, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., described it at the last annual meeting of the American Historical Association, is due to many factors. Change is not only the constant rule of life; it has been accelerated to such a degree that historians must begin their investigations much earlier in order to keep up with the course of history. Furthermore, the intensification of the means and the volume of communication have served as an additional stimulus to the writing of contemporary history. Also, ours is an age of fantastic self-concern; we are simply preoccupied with ourselves. Given these conditions and the increasingly early availability of manuscript collections, the contemporary role of the historian is abundantly

Dr. Wolf is Associate Professor of History at The Pennsylvania State University, Capitol Campus.—Editor

* A version of this paper was read before the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association at Beaver Falls on 20 October 1967.

1 Sir Walter Raleigh, *History of the World* (London, 1614), Preface.

2 Sylvester K. Stevens, *Pennsylvania: Birthplace of a Nation* (Random House, New York, 1964), vii.

3 Cicero, *De Oratore*, Book II, sec. 9 (London, 1942), 225.

clear — he must begin his research and writing much sooner.⁴

Despite the mass of documentation now available to the contemporary historian, the rapidity of change and the tremendous expansion of the communications media have demonstrably proven the inadequacy of the traditional documents of history. Oral history projects, such as those at Columbia and the John F. Kennedy Library, are attempts at meaningful supplementation, but the active participation of the contemporary historian in the areas of his scholarly concern becomes more and more necessary. His observations add a further dimension to his research.

In a series in *Life* magazine, Theodore H. White noted the development of this significant trend.⁵ Quite frankly, "From White House to city hall, scholars stalk the corridors of American power." These "action-intellectuals," as White referred to them, "have transformed the ivory tower. For them, it is a forward observation post on the urgent front of the future."

My involvement with the Scranton administration and, subsequently, the Scranton Papers, is the direct result of an academic program which fully recognized this need. The National Center for Education in Politics, which sponsored my full-year faculty fellowship with the Governor, gave some consideration to historians despite its political science orientation. Although the program has been terminated due to the exhaustion of funds from that "large body of money completely surrounded by outstretched hands," other agencies have assumed the responsibilities which the National Center carried so well.⁶

The accomplishments of the National Center for Education in Politics, with the financial support of the Ford Foundation, are impressive. Thirty-six of the fifty state Governors accepted NCEP Graduate or Faculty Fellows onto their staff. Fourteen National Committee Fellows, seven at each committee, served from 1958 to 1965. Forty-five National Convention Fellows observed the national nominating conventions of 1960 and 1964. Of the thirty-six NCEP Faculty Fellows and one hundred and five Graduate Fellows in State and Local Politics, twenty-one and forty-eight, respectively, served with Governors. This is an impressive demonstration of the encouragement of action-intellectuals, and Bernard Hennessy and his predecessors as

4 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "On the Writing of Contemporary History," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1967), 69-71.

5 Theodore H. White, "The Action Intellectuals," *Life* (June 9, 1967), 44, 57.

6 *Ibid.*, 64.

director of NCEP can take pride in the impact of their programs.⁷

There is little doubt in my mind that the opportunity for such first-hand observation and participation provides a kind of insight which is invaluable in subsequent historical studies. A daily journal, a scrapbook, and a set of files from the day-to-day operation of an executive office can offer the kinds of data not usually available to the historian of any period. And I, for one, am not necessarily convinced that "Truth (is) the daughter of Time (alone)." ⁸

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association might give serious consideration to the establishment of a cooperative fellowship program at the post-doctoral level to encourage and support such an opportunity for the members of our craft.

But the Scranton Papers, rather than the subject of contemporary history, were to be the substance of this presentation. Consequently, the manner of my involvement, the composition of the papers, and the nature of the work completed and planned are the areas of consideration from this point on.

An historian who serves as a Special Assistant to the Governor is both a participant and an observer. And it does not necessarily follow that the validity of his observations is clouded by the degree of his involvement. For the moment, perhaps, but in the long run the scholar's commitment is to his discipline and the truth which it reveals to him. My daily journal will, I trust, provide the ultimate vindication for any questions regarding the priority of my commitment.

Having entered the Governor's Office as an historian with the ultimate objective of working with the Governor's papers, I conferred with him frequently toward the conclusion of my fellowship regarding this opportunity. Although Yale University had expressed an interest in obtaining his papers, for obvious reasons, the Governor was desirous of having the papers deposited in a Pennsylvania repository. The final decision in favor of the Archives of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission was the result.

Accordingly, on 12 December 1966, William W. Scranton agreed to "deposit with the Historical and Museum Commission . . . for preservation in the State Archives, the files of (his) office," subject

⁷ Bernard C. Hennessy, *Political Education and Political Science, The National Center for Education in Politics, 1947-1966* (New York, 1966), 121-126, 128, 139.

⁸ Schlesinger, 73.

to five conditions.⁹ Among these conditions, which included matters of security, storage, copying and access, was the grant, to Dr. S. K. Stevens and myself, of "permission to use these letters, papers or other records for scholarly purposes."¹⁰ Thus began the great adventure.

The transfer of the official records of the Scranton administration to the fourteenth floor of the Archives Tower was completed "over a period of five days, through the joint concentrated efforts of Governor Scranton's Chief Clerk, Joseph B. Schneitman, and the staff of the Division of Archives of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, headed by William H. Work."¹¹ Information regarding the transfer was released to the press on 14 February 1967.

At the same time, Scranton's personal papers were sent to his home in Dalton, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, these papers were neither processed nor cataloged. Incidentally, the problems which this disorganization created suggest that future Governors may wish to deposit all of their papers with the Archives with the removal of personal papers following the necessary processing.

The research on the Scranton Papers, both in Harrisburg and Dalton, commenced in February of 1967 with the assistance of a grant from the Central Fund for Research of the Pennsylvania State University. The massive extent of the two collections required that the cartons first be "cased" to determine the contents and their research potential.

The two collections consist of 661 12"-15"-10" cartons in Harrisburg and 76 of the same at Dalton. For me they have offered a challenging career in historical scholarship.

A rather cursory content analysis of the papers in the Archives is quite revealing. Almost forty per cent (38.5%) of the papers, that is the 251 cartons labeled "General Files," are junk. They include the general correspondence from and to individuals and departments which flowed through the Governor's Office during his four-year term. These General Files are an incredible discouragement to the researcher. However, no historian can ignore them and occasionally they are quite productive, such as in the case of the ill-fated Allegheny County Chairman, Paul Hugus.

The "Subject Files," encompassing the next 128 cartons of the archival collection, are of major significance. It is here that the re-

⁹ William W. Scranton to Dr. S. K. Stevens, 12 December 1966.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Press Release, The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 14 February 1967.

searcher must go to find out who saw the Governor and when. It is in this section of the papers that one finds the items of particular interest to this Governor and his administration. Regardless of what William Scranton may say concerning his pride in the accomplishments in the area of civil service, the fact of the matter is that economic development was the major subject of concern and documentation. No less than ten cartons of the papers are devoted to that topic. The only item which received more attention in the Subject Files was that of invitations. "Invitations Accepted" and "Invitations Regretted" occupy twenty-four cartons of this file with six devoted to acceptance and eighteen to regrets. The ceremonial obligations of the Governor are clearly recognized in this area.

Education and Water Conservation, with eight and seven cartons respectively, followed economic development as primary areas of concern during the Scranton years. In all three cases, however, the interstate nature of many of the activities and correspondence expanded the contents of these particular files. The efforts to attract outside industries to the Commonwealth, the interstate compact for education, and the planning for the Delaware, Potomac, and Susquehanna River basins are illustratively supportive in this regard.

Political campaigns are also included in the Subject Files. Four cartons of material are devoted to the conduct of Republican campaigns during the tenure of the administration. And, of course, the all-important campaign for the Presidency in 1964 is also found here. Three cartons constitute the archival collection with position papers, bills, contributions and general correspondence being among the items of interest.

A few examples from the correspondence are illustrative of their value. Spanning the period from November of 1963 to November of 1965, they offer support, criticism and concern for the Presidential aspirations of William Warren Scranton.

Tom McCabe, of the Scott Paper Co., invited some of the top Republican leaders and supporters to Philadelphia for the "opportunity to talk with a young statesman whom I consider to be the ablest Governor Pennsylvania ever had."¹² These "McCabe luncheons," as they became known in the press, may have given Scranton the pleasure of meeting "topflight people at one sitting," but they never provided

¹² Scranton Papers, Carton 310, 26 September 1963. (Names of all correspondents have been omitted in order to preserve their anonymity. Only the carton number and the date of the correspondence are noted here and in the following citations.)

the vehicle which McCabe wanted to launch the campaign.¹³

Once the Governor announced his candidacy, the stream of correspondence flooded. Overwhelmingly supportive, it still contained numerous expressions in favor of Senator Goldwater.

However, once the nomination was lost the moderates increased their volume and expressed their disillusionment with Scranton's endorsement of the convention's choice.

A woman from San Francisco expressed her displeasure in German:¹⁴

Nur Die Allergroessten Kaelber

Waehlen Ihren Metzger Selber.

(Translation — Only the dumbest ox chooses his own butcher.)

A political scientist from Chicago said "Scranton was right the first time." Quoting Shaw, he added, "If you want clean water in the pail, you must begin by throwing out the dirty water in it, not mixing the two."¹⁵

A St. Louis teacher deplored the Governor's "elastic conscience" in "running the Goldwater campaign." He thought it was "a lousy example for our children."¹⁶

Yet the week before the election Scranton's introduction of Goldwater in Pittsburgh brought a letter from a Pennsylvanian who said he had "attended many Republican rallies and never did I hear such a disappointing introduction of a nominee as the one you made last night."¹⁷

Clifton White hedged a few bets in the letter he wrote to Scranton on 2 November 1964. Uncannily timed, this communication from the Chairman of Citizens for Goldwater-Miller sounded almost like a job application. White noted, "It has been my good fortune to be working with some top caliber people from several different states and I venture some of them would be very helpful to the Republican Party for years to come."¹⁸

The rebuilding of the Republican Party is an additional aspect of the politics of the period which is contained in the Subject Files. A letter from a Western Pennsylvania friend to which the Governor re-

13 Scranton Papers, Carton 310, 13 November 1963.

14 application Papers, Carton 352, 7 October 1964.

15 Scranton Papers, Carton 351, 8 October 1964.

16 Scranton Papers, Carton 352, 20 October 1964.

17 Scranton Papers, Carton 352, 30 October 1964.

18 Scranton Papers, Carton 351, 2 November 1964.

sponded as "one of the finest I have ever received," captures the Scranton appeal while accentuating the real dilemma of the candidate.¹⁹ A few lines from the letter will suffice to demonstrate its merit.²⁰

"Few men in public life today have such an attractive family as yours. An intelligent pretty wife, especially gifted to deal with people; . . . and those good-looking children who could melt more people's hearts in five minutes than all the politicians in Penna. in a year. Should they not be the most compelling reason for you remaining active in politics and government?"

"Yours is not a need for money, so their future economically is secure and would that our country was the same. However, you could make a tremendous contribution to their future welfare by continuing your interest in politics and government.

". . . You can afford this luxury and few others can. You also have the necessary qualities of calmness, wisdom, and courage under fire as well as the ability to choose people of talent as your immediate associates. In addition, you possess a practical political sense, rare, but so necessary for success in the business of politics and government.

". . . Two years ago, you chided men and women for failing to respond to the challenge of government . . . if you falter now, everything can be lost."

Scranton's decision to withdraw from politics came seven months after this letter on 2 June 1966.²¹ Whether or not the decision is irrevocable remains to be seen. The former Governor was a delegate to Pennsylvania's fifth constitutional convention and in July of 1968 he announced his support of Nelson Rockefeller for the Republican nomination for President.

The county job files, from Adams to York, are also located within the Subject Files. Interestingly enough, the significance of particular county chairmen along with the relevance of an occasional "Harve says OK" notation can easily be gleaned from this four-carton selection.²²

Within this subject listing there is an incredible amount of amusing nonsense, too. For example, five cartons of correspondence from chronic writers, most of it right-wing, suggests that the Scranton administration was more satisfying to the moderate-to-liberal voter. One woman wrote to the Governor every day while he was in office, often sending nothing more than the headlines from the pages of her

19 Scranton Papers, Carton 361, 10 November 1965.

20 Scranton Papers, Carton 361, 6 November 1965.

21 Scranton Papers, Carton 489, 2 June 1966 (Release).

22 Scranton Papers, Cartons 331-334 (Job Files).

local newspaper. Anti-vivisectionists, religious fanatics and passionate reactionaries deluged the Governor with a constant stream of advice and criticism.

Statements, speeches, press conferences and other official releases of the administration constitute the third schedule item of the papers. These 129 cartons massively demonstrate the public relations consciousness of the Governor and his personal staff. In the course of his four years as Governor, Scranton delivered some 411 prepared addresses which in themselves present an important source for analysis and study. Although the personal staff was responsible for most of the speech preparation, there was infrequent assistance from national scholars of the stature of Malcolm Moos and Arthur Burns. Unfortunately, few of the original speech drafts are available so that it is quite difficult to document clearly the contributions which the Governor made to his own public presentations. Here again, the common danger of evaluating a public man by his public utterances is accentuated. The Governor's practice of handwritten memos on speech topics cannot be gleaned from the official records.

The Legislative Files compose the fourth schedule item. Legislative calendars, special session issues, individual files for legislation, "dead" or "alive," and the correspondence of the Legislative Secretary are contained in these eighty-five cartons. When the correspondence from the Legislative Office (eleven cartons) is added to this array, the documentary support for a survey of the legislative program is quite extensive.

Jack Conmy, Press Secretary to the Governor, kept an impressive subject file with extensive clippings, correspondence and research information related to every aspect of the conduct of the executive office. These files alone ran to some fourteen cartons of data.

The records of the Boards and Commissions, also a separate schedule item (10), filled twenty-nine cartons. Of these, almost one-fourth (seven) are concerned with approved appointments, or "OK Files." The data run the gamut from Justices of the Peace to Workmen's Compensation Referees. These records, in conjunction with the previously referred-to Job Files, can give the researcher a substantial resource for work concerning the all-important patronage in Pennsylvania.

One of the most surprising discoveries to this researcher was the amazing fact that the files of the Secretary to the Governor, the only cabinet member of the Governor's personal staff, are contained in a single carton. This again highlights the limitations of the documents

in the historian's reconstruction of the past. The telephone, not the memo or some other written record, is the instrument of modern government and politics. Until the historian can gain access to the information transmitted via this means, his account will of necessity be limited. We must not only begin our research sooner — we must get into the office to find out what really goes on.

In its entirety, the archival records amount to 661 cartons, ten of which, related to the Boards and Commissions, have not even been deposited with the Historical and Museum Commission. The first four schedule items (General Files, 1-251; Subject Files, 252-379; Releases, 380-508; and Legislative Files, 509-593) are the most voluminous although the most extensive array is actually the least significant.

The personal files of William W. Scranton were sent to his home at Marworth (Dalton, Pennsylvania) from which he moved them to the adjoining property of his late aunt. Consisting of seventy-six archival cartons, they contain information on the aborted quest for the Presidency, the political withdrawal of the Governor, the tragic death of Walter Alessandroni, a copy of all the releases and speeches, and the commendable letters, gifts and other personal files of the Governor.

Without a doubt, the most valuable material to the scholar in the Governor's personal files concerns the campaign for the Presidency. The most random survey of these data astounds the researcher with the awesome task of launching a candidate for the office of President of these United States. A few examples may suffice to illustrate the point. Carton after carton of letters and telegrams, answered and unanswered, both pro and con, simply overwhelm you. A file for each and every state with lists of personal friends, influential friends, delegates, elected officials, and national Republican leaders, "Students for Scranton," "Kids for Bill," plus folders for each of the potential candidates for the nomination introduces you to the personnel of a Presidential campaign. Account books, contribution files and records of bills paid offer a partial picture of the excessive cost of major campaigning. Thousands of people and close to a million dollars went into Governor Scranton's hopeless striving to be the Republican standard bearer in 1964.

A complete clipping file, including an alphabetized collection of the various state and national newsmen, provides a ready reference to the journalistic accounts of the campaign. Such a collection can save the researcher endless hours of newspaper digging. These dozen cartons, along with an equal number relating to the campaign itself, provide the major resource of the private papers.

An extremely personal and immeasurably useful item in the private papers is the work of the Governor's pollster, John Bucci. Five cartons of Bucci Reports offer clues to the tactics and strategy of William Scranton in both state and national affairs. It might even be suggested that John Bucci wrote the script for "the Hamlet of Harrisburg."

Five cartons of assorted pictures, good, bad and indifferent, provide visual support for the documentary record and three cartons of press conference tapes and films offer the voice and appearance of the Governor in a useful supplement.

It is not an easy task to present a paper which merely provides a first view of an historical collection. And my content analysis may have offered little to whet the appetites of other potential scholars of gubernatorial history.

The historiography of modern Pennsylvania is woefully weak. Nelson McGeary's work on Gifford Pinchot, Richard Keller on George Earle, and Reed Smith's study of George Leader are about the extent of it — and all of these are oriented to political science rather than history! It is time for us to get on with Pennsylvania's history. If we don't, the great synthesizers are going to be left without the wherewithal for their momentous summaries which all of us seem bound to imitate.

It is my intention to develop a model, the Scranton Model if you will, over the next five to ten years so that the histories of other gubernatorial administrations may also be launched. The papers of five other Governors are already waiting in the Archival Tower. Martin, Duff, Fine, Leader and Lawrence have all left their official papers with the Historical and Museum Commission. In Martin's case, the personal papers are there, too. Graduate students and fully-trained research scholars can and must begin this formidable task. Who knows but that in the effort we may not only provide the documented record but the insights necessary to the resolution of the vexatious problems of this modern age?

There is much to be said for historians who "share the action and passion of (their) time."²³ Historians can enter the arena and write better histories because of their involvement. And, even if they don't succeed to this degree, they can provide the chroniclers with the all-too-necessary first-hand accounts which are vital to contemporary history.

²³ Schlesinger, 74.

Benedetto Croce certainly pointed the way with his essays on the theory and practice of history.²⁴ To Croce, history was "the living being" and "the idea of a history with its sources outside itself . . . another fancy to be dispelled." Small wonder then, that he would conclude that "every true history is contemporary history." There is, as Croce described it, a synthesizing unity in the relationship of history to life.

There is both advantage and opportunity for the historian privileged to operate on the periphery of power. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has said, "To take part in public affairs, to smell the sweat and dust of battle, is surely to stimulate and amplify the historical imagination."²⁵

The participant historian can be traced to classical ancestors. Thucydides "described nothing but what I saw myself, or learned from others of whom I made the most careful and particular inquiry."²⁶

The merit of contemporary history is to be found in its critical audience, the participants in the events of the time. Their reactions can serve only to enliven the historical record and bring us closer to the truth. We can no longer be guided by Raleigh's fears if we are to record truly the events of our time.

The papers of William W. Scranton have offered this historian the opportunity to verify or repudiate his own observations. The future can open similar opportunities to other members of our profession. But we must initiate the relationship. Government does not seek the scholar, regardless of what Teddy White may indicate of the action intellectuals. We Pennsylvania historians have neglected our own history, both as participants and observers. Change must catch up with us, also.

We must systematically begin the research on the papers of Governors from Martin down to the present. And we must plan for the future so that participant-historians may have the challenge and stimulation of first-hand observation and involvement.

To this end I urge Pennsylvania historians to give serious consideration to the establishment of an annual fellowship with the Governor of Pennsylvania. Or, failing in this, the beginning of a pattern of providing at least one historian with the opportunity of serving

²⁴ Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice* (New York, 1923), 12-23.

²⁵ *Time*, 17 December 1965, 54.

²⁶ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. (New York, 1960), 33-34.

as a participant-observer for each of the Governors of this Commonwealth. Perhaps foundation support can be obtained for this ambitious proposal but, if not, we should seek the support of other associations of American historians in the development of such a program.

At the same time, the files of Governors Martin, Duff, Fine, Leader and Lawrence present the existing challenge of contemporary history. Are Pennsylvania historians interested in Pennsylvania history? The answer, most significant to the future of modern Pennsylvania historiography, rests with all of us.