FEEDBACK

American Sociologists on Soviet Scholars

The following letter was sent by Otto N. Larsen, Executive Officer of the American Sociological Association, to Aleksei Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Academician M. V. Keldysh, President of the Soviet Academy of Science.

On behalf of the President and Council of the American Sociological Association, representing more than 14,000 sociologists, I wish to convey the following statement.

The world scientific community shares a common concern in promoting scientific development. Free and full communication between scholars of all countries is today surely one of the crucial determinants of the rate of scientific progress. Scholars in the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as those in other countries, have, therefore, a great and common stake in free exchange of scientific publications and in free mobility.

In light of these common interests we have been deeply concerned about reports of restrictions upon Soviet scholars with regard to foreign travel and emigration and about the methods now being used in the enforcement of these restrictions. Especially dismaying have been reports of scholars being dismissed from their jobs and otherwise harassed because they have indicated a desire to emigrate. We write to express our concern over such limitations on the exercise of basic human rights which impose hardships not only upon the scholars directly involved, but upon the world scientific community as a whole.

We recognize that discussions of issues like these are commonly used as weapons of international propaganda. However, this is remote from the intent of our present communication. We believe that the world community of scholars generally agrees in opposing the practices that we have just been discussing, and we wish to lend all the support that we can to those scholars in the Soviet Union who share our conception of the way in which the scholarly world should live and work.

Erratum

There was a small mis-wording which might lead to larger misunderstandings in the article, "Communal Life-Styles for the Old" (July/August 1973). It suggested that "most students of aging" consider disengagement biologically based and therefore inevitable. These days *most* students of aging do not accept the controversial theory of disengagement first proposed by Elaine Cumming and William Henry, in their book, *Growing Old* (1961). Nearly all of the recent literature suggests that the process is evident only under certain conditions: not those in which old people have socially reinforced power, not where social ties are encouraged, not when age-associated losses—widowhood, illness, retirement—are absent. Moreover, disengagement is no simple or uniform process, and an

individual can disengage in one way (see fewer people, have less responsibility) while remaining fully engaged in other ways (e.g., care a lot about those he or she does see). All in all, gerontologists recognize that growing old is as profoundly a social phenomenon as growing up.

*Arlie Hochschild
University of California
Berkeley, California*

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