

The Forum

Revisiting America's State Papers—Comment

TO THE EDITOR:

Contrary to Dr. Claussen's statement on p. 531 of your October 1973 issue, I did not edit the fourteen volumes of the *New American State Papers* series, "Science and Technology". I did contribute an introduction. Claussen would have known that had he bothered to examine those volumes before blasting me and my agency. I am not the "ranking official historian" of the Smithsonian Institution, an absurd statement displaying ignorance of our situation. All my work on the introduction was done on my own time, not during office hours. I would appreciate publication of this clarification.

I have not seen the volumes Claussen complains about and cannot comment on them. My views on the fourteen volumes I introduced are available in the set in my office, if he cannot find a copy elsewhere.

NATHAN REINGOLD, *Editor*
The Joseph Henry Papers

TO THE EDITOR:

I have read with some interest, and with some amazement, a feature in your October issue by Martin P. Claussen. It is evident—especially from the first four pages and some footnotes—that Mr. Claussen is very familiar with the editorial and printing history of the great collections of federal documents, especially the *American State Papers* and the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*.

However, I do not appreciate articles written in anger; and Mr. Claussen's irritation reached a crescendo condemning a project of this company. I think some of his comments were unjust and unfair. It would be a simple matter to answer with a tirade; but I don't think that would serve any purpose. I shall just enumerate some points of disagreement which I have with Mr. Claussen's views, and make some objective comments:

1. Eleven eminent scholars wrote introductions to the eleven subject

sets of *The New American State Papers*. Mr. Claussen says that they "edited" the work. At no time or in any place did this company make such a statement, and I am really at a loss to fathom why he made such an incorrect observation. These scholars agreed to write introductions because they felt that the concept of *The New American State Papers* was both viable and needed.

2. Each volume of *The New American State Papers* carries an acknowledgment at the front—just a simple note of thanks to various institutions whose staffs were particularly gracious and helpful during the researching and production of *The New American State Papers*. As a matter of courtesy, we included a line of thanks to the National Archives. Mr. Claussen implies that we claim some people on the staff of the Archives acted as consultants to this company. It is evident that Mr. Claussen misread this note of acknowledgment. Their learned staff helped our research workers locate collections, and at times offered suggestions. (I presume that as professional people they extend the same courtesy and help every day to researchers.) I greatly regret that Mr. Claussen misinterpreted the intention and meaning of this simple note of gratitude to the staff of the Archives.

3. Mr. Claussen says that our "prolonged unofficial residence in the National Archives Building was terminated." There was nothing unofficial about our research in the Archives; and our work there was never terminated. This statement is both unfair and untrue. We are receiving today the same courtesy in the National Archives that we received over the last two years. And the kind people in the Archives have our respect and thanks.

4. Mr. Claussen misinterpreted the role played by Dr. Thomas C. Cochran in the publication of *The New American State Papers*. Dr. Cochran acted as general editor, which in any large project such as this, is synonymous with the term "chief consultant." This point is understood in normal publishing terminology. That being understood, any criticism made by Mr. Claussen about Dr. Cochran can be summed up in that now-famous word—"inoperative."

5. I disagree with some of Mr. Claussen's comments on Dr. W. Eugene Hollon. The typographical errors in the introduction are not his fault: this company takes full blame for them. (There are errors in *The New American State Papers*, mostly typographical, which are being corrected at this company's expense, and copies now in libraries are being corrected.) I am quite sure that Dr. Hollon, a distinguished scholar, is quite capable of answering the other criticisms of Mr. Claussen.

6. I don't think it was cricket for Mr. Claussen to impugn the names of Drs. Nathan Reingold and Wayne D. Rasmussen. They wrote two introductions, but they did not do it "at government expense."

7. Mr. Claussen is, of course, entitled to his opinions, but I take issue with him when he said that Scholarly Resources "impertinently" copyrighted *The New American State Papers*. Why not? We made a very substantial investment in this program, and thankfully the copyright laws

of this country clearly protect our program. And rightfully so. Otherwise, no one would be willing to undertake programs of this magnitude without some protection, as they would be microfilmed the afternoon that they were published by some other company. I have seen this happen once too often.

Mr. Claussen accused this company of not delivering "the mandatory copyright-deposit copies of this massive congressional reprint claimed by the Library of Congress." What can I say? Mr. Claussen knows that books submitted for copyright are sent to the Copyright Office. We complied with this ordinance. I believe that the Copyright Office, after registering the copyright, transfers the books to the Library of Congress.

8. Mr. Claussen says in very blunt language that *The New American State Papers* "may indeed be the single highest-priced example, to date, in the already crowded-for-honors field of public-document republication." That is totally untrue. I can point out scores of publications, which were mere reprints, reproduced without an iota of editorial work, and which, on a page basis, cost 15 to 20 percent more than *The New American State Papers*. The research and production problems of this project were vast. From a production point alone, I should like to point out that we had to microfilm the documents, make copyflo, and hand-opaque hundreds of thousands of pages, in order to make the job elegant and readable.

9. Mr. Claussen has a great respect for the Gales and Seaton *American State Papers*, and evidently he knows quite a lot about the history of this set. However, it is an unfinished work, and its errors should have been corrected over the last century and a half. And it certainly should have been corrected by the companies who published the set in the various microform editions. Mr. Claussen seems to think that the *American State Papers* should have been the norm for *The New American State Papers*. This is a different century and the needs of this century are not the same as the last. The purposes of both sets are different.

Mr. Claussen seems to resent the fact that we did not take the divisions of the *American State Papers* as the norm for *The New American State Papers*. There was very good editorial and practical reasons for that. Just one instance: we felt that the two Foreign Affairs volumes in the *American State Papers*, covering the years 1789-1828, are not comprehensive enough. So Scholarly Resources started another planned program to give ample coverage to the important subject. Within the last few months we have issued a program of twenty volumes dealing with Sino-American relations, 1842-1860. And within the coming months we will announce two other projects on American foreign affairs, covering 1789-1828 and 1829-1860. We also intend to announce, very shortly, a large program on American military and naval affairs from the Revolution to World War I.

11. As *The New American State Papers* are not yet finished, we did not send out review copies. (It is a publishing custom not to send out large sets until the last volume is off the press.) Consequently I was a

little surprised to see the review appear at this time, as no review copies were sent to *The American Archivist*.

12. There is no such thing as a perfect anthology, and there is no such thing as a basic selection of federal documents which will suit all tastes, opinions, and philosophies. Mr. Claussen mentioned that the Gales and Seaton *American State Papers* were the best thing in their field published in the first century of the Republic. He is perfectly right. But *The New American State Papers* are the best things published in this century, and the mere fact that they are being well used in the libraries now is the best proof that they fill a lacuna and need.

Mr. Claussen has a precise knowledge of all the various microform editions of the *American State Papers* and the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*. The mere fact that they are on microfilm, however, doesn't mean that they are used. They most certainly are not; and in many instances they are totally unuseable. Many good libraries would say that the microform editions of federal documents were a waste of investment.

It is all very fine for Mr. Claussen to list all the various editions and collections and auxiliary tools for the use of federal materials which are available to graduate students; but anyone who has worked in the major libraries of this country—including the Library of Congress—would be amazed at times to see how many important volumes in the *Congressional Serial Set* still have uncut pages—which proves that they were never read over the decades.

13. In the closing paragraphs of his article, Mr. Claussen presented a very interesting blueprint for a massive collection of State Papers, both archival and printed, together with focal selections from newspapers. Such a program would be absolutely colossal. It would be marvelous if such a thing were done; and it would certainly dwarf the 176 volumes in *The New American State Papers*. As publishers, we have to bear in mind the ideal . . . but we have to fix for the possible. Very few libraries today, for many and various reasons, are in a position to entertain the idea of purchasing a massive project such as Mr. Claussen outlines. But perhaps a day will come when such will be possible; and when that day dawns, *The New American State Papers* will have served its purpose. But until then, it will be used with benefit by the colleges and universities of this country.

MICHAEL GLAZIER, *President*
Scholarly Resources, Inc.

Computers in Archives

TO THE EDITOR:

Readers may be interested in comparing the returns from two surveys designed to gather information about the uses of computer technology in archives. Our Committee on Data Archives and Machine-Readable Records distributed a detailed questionnaire to U.S. and Canadian state,