

Gerald R. Ford

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A man who had served in the House of Representatives for some 25 years without coveting the presidency, Ford came to the White House more as a healer and caretaker than a bold new leader. He did not begin his tenure by routing out Nixon staffers, as many of his supporters hoped he would; nor did he set about to make significant changes in policy, except where openness and mood were concerned. Ford is a true conservative Republican who, as his record and campaign rhetoric show, believes in fiscal restraint, social and technological progress through private industry, and the idea that government should help those

who help themselves. Even though he has no overall, formal science policy, Ford has been consistent in his approach to the science-related problems of energy, nuclear proliferation, environmental protection, and health care delivery so that one can get an idea of where he stands.

Energy: Gas, Oil, Coal

One of the most pressing, and difficult, problems facing the United States today is the fact that we may be running out of energy, certainly cheap energy. Although the scientists to whom Nixon and his predecessors refused to listen knew we were headed for trouble, it took the Arab oil embargo and the long gas lines of the winter of 1973 to get the government and the public to realize that the issue is one of vital importance to our

domestic, military, and economic life. It is often said by environmentalists, academics, and Democrats (who are frequently one and the same person) that Ford has no energy policy. That is not exactly true. What he has is an energy policy they do not like.

The Nixon Administration coined the slogan "energy independence" to describe its attitude toward the energy crisis, and Ford picked it up. Certainly, it is an appealing notion. The way to avoid long gas lines and an intolerable vulnerability to the whims of the rulers of the Middle East is to produce enough energy by ourselves.

One step along the road to energy independence, Ford said and others agreed, was conservation. Thus, the Administration proposed and Congress

Scientific Journal Publishers Are Perplexed

The Postal Service, taking a new look at a long-standing regulation, has come up with a pronouncement that could throw the whole system of scientific publication on its ear by radically raising mailing costs for many scientific journals.

In what may be the first of a rash of similar actions, it has notified two journals that the publication of manuscripts subjected to page charges (money paid by authors to defray publication costs) comes under the definition of "advertising" in federal law.

The potential damage the ruling could inflict would be to principles as well as pocketbooks. It would cause publishers to label as "advertisements" any articles for which page charges had been paid. Such classification would subject this editorial matter to the higher postal rates applied to advertising (increased costs would vary depending on the proportion of "advertising" in a given issue, but it could as much as triple them). It would also knock many journals out of the second class mail category (which has exceedingly low rates designed to facilitate the flow of edifying materials) because a publication must contain less than 75 percent advertising to qualify for the lower rates.

No one, apparently including the Postal Service, has any idea how far it intends to press its new initiative. The reaction of journal publishers is one of cautious alarm mixed with a high degree of incredulity. "Ridiculous," "appalling," and "obnoxious" are some of the terms commonly applied to the situation. Everyone is worrying about the problem, but societies are trying not to make too much noise for fear the Postal Service, cobra-like, will strike next at whatever it sees rustling in the grass. A widespread crackdown could be disastrous for science publishing, driving many smaller journals out of business and causing others to raise subscription rates to astronomical levels.

What has happened so far is that two journals, *Plant Physiology* and *Astrophysical Journal*, have received letters from their local post offices. The letters explain that since authors are assessed costs for publication of their

manuscripts, the manuscripts are "advertisements" according to the *Postal Service Manual* because this term includes "any editorial or other reading matter for the publication of which money or other valuable consideration is paid, accepted or promised."

The letter goes on to say that "such articles must be marked 'advertisement' and charged the advertising mailing rate." The respondents were given 10 days to say what they were going to do "to avoid future errors of this type."

According to Darwin Sharp, director of the Postal Service's office of mail classification, orders have gone out to post offices to send similar notices to a number of publications, including the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.*

Nothing drastic is about to happen, though, because there are various lengthy hearing procedures the parties would have to go through before the Postal Service could revoke a journal's second class mailing privileges.

Scientific societies have not yet decided what strategy to pursue if the Postal Service cannot be persuaded to back down on its new enforcement policy. One thing is certain: under no circumstances will publishers agree to labeling their scientific articles as "advertisements"—a concession one association member said would "really be an Alice in Wonderland type of thing."

The American Institute of Physics (AIP), publisher of *Astrophysical Journal*, has taken the precaution of removing the statement about page rates from the beginning of the journal (it is not stopping the practice, which applies to virtually all the papers published). It is waiting for advice from its lawyers on what to do next. Houston Baker of the Society for Plant Physiology has been meeting with post office officials to get a clarification of their stand, but he says the plant journal would be minimally affected by the

*Others in line for letters, according to Sharp, are the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry*, *Journal of Organic Chemistry*, *Journal of Inorganic Chemistry*, *American Journal of Physiology*, *Journal of Applied Physiology*, *Journal of Neurophysiology*, *Journal of Foraminiferal Research*, *Geophysical Research Letters*, *Reviews of Geophysics and Space Physics*, and *Water Resources Research*.

passed legislation aimed at fuel economy standards for automobiles and standards for insulation of new buildings. These were logical, and politically easy, moves that critics, who would like to see energy conservation achieved through federal regulation, say do not go far enough. Ford, however, thinks it more appropriate to move more indirectly, through economic measures that would simultaneously foster energy conservation and stimulate research in private industry by making energy more expensive. That is to say, he wants to decontrol the price of oil and natural gas. Congress reluctantly went along with a proposal to decontrol oil prices—the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 contains a provision for the gradual decontrol of domestic oil prices after 40

months—but opposition to decontrol of natural gas prices remains strong. The President addressed these issues recently in his nationally televised press conference. Calling once again for decontrol of natural gas prices, he said that the utilities simply are not going to provide the supplies the country will need unless they and their investors can make a big profit on the deal. Congress is not anxious to go along with a scheme that will cost constituents more and, thus far, irrespective of the merits of Ford's proposal, it has not been politically salable.

While favoring the conservation of gas and oil, Ford proposes to meet short- and mid-term needs for more energy by stepping up the mining of coal, which he calls "the most abundant energy resource

available." In this regard, Ford has proposed policies to permit mining of coal on federally owned lands in the West, as well as greater exploitation of eastern coal supplies.

In addressing the possibility of expanding energy resources through increasing coal production, one comes smack up against conflicting pressures for the preservation of the environment. Indeed, energy, the environment, and the economy are thoroughly intertwined matters, and it is impossible to take action in one area that does not somehow affect the others. One has to make a choice, and the President has clearly gone with energy and the economy at the expense of some of the more stringent proposals to safeguard the environment. For example, whereas Ford's proposals for using west-

and Alarmed About Threatened Postage Hike

new initiative because 95 percent of its material comes from members, who are not assessed page charges anyway. He says the remaining material could be issued as high-priced reprints, or the authors could join the society (membership is only \$10).

Other societies are looking around for advice. Fred Spilhaus of the American Geophysical Union says he is trying to coordinate a strategy for the Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives in the event that it is decided that the only way to remedy the situation is through congressional revision of the legislation.

The threatened Postal Service crackdown strikes at a practice—defraying publication costs by (usually voluntary) page charges—that has been in use since the 1920's and that has repeatedly been affirmed as legitimate by federal science agencies. Page charges are levied in more than half of the thousands of journals published in this country and supply a significant portion of their operating revenues. The AIP, which, along with the American Chemical Society, collects more than half of the estimated \$6.5 million brought in annually from page charges, relies on these charges to pay 80 percent of the costs of its publications.

If worse comes to worst, the only option these journals would have would be to get reclassified into third class, the one usually reserved for advertising. This would roughly triple their mailing costs. Many small journals with no big society to help pick up the financial burden would go under. The others would have to raise subscription and page costs, thereby reducing circulation. Libraries, which are charged much higher rates anyway, would have to stop subscriptions to all but the most popular journals. Journals that weigh more than a pound would have to go to fourth class, the parcel post rate. One of these is *Astrophysical Journal*, which is very weighty. Jean Sachs of the University of Chicago Press, which publishes it, says this move would increase mailing costs from \$12,000 to \$72,000 a year. An issue of a journal that is now sent from the East Coast to California for 6.6 cents would cost \$1.48 to send

fourth class. An alternative would be to divide up the issues so each weighed less than a pound, which would mean more mailings, and nightmares for librarians, among others.

A mystery to all is why the Postal Service chose to act when it did. The federal law has been on the books since 1912. Did someone just discover page charges after all these years? The opinion of most scientific society officials is that the organization was motivated by simple greed for more revenue.

Sharp of the Postal Service explains that the postmaster general "wrote to us bringing the page charge matter to our attention" in December 1975. He agrees that the page charges were no secret before then, "but we evidently did not reflect on them." Subsequently, he says, several postal inspectors raised the question. More attention was brought to the issue early this year when the Xerox Corporation sponsored an article by Harrison Salisbury that was published in *Esquire* magazine. Xerox, an advertiser in *Esquire*, paid Salisbury for the article, which the magazine got for free. (*Esquire* promised to eschew such arrangements in the future after author E. B. White criticized the fact that Xerox appeared to be buying space for Salisbury.) The Postal Service decided that the Salisbury piece was an "advertisement" and ordered the magazine to pay higher postage rates for that issue.

Postal officials have explained they now have no choice but to enforce the law, even though this clearly goes against its original intent, which was the laudable one of ensuring that advertising was not misconstrued by readers as editorial matter. The recent developments do not at this point amount to a crisis for science publishing. If appeals to reason fail, publishers believe the best recourse will be to get Congress to change the law. Meanwhile, in view of the fact that page charges are almost always paid by money from government research grants, the government finds itself in the not unfamiliar position of grabbing with one hand what it is doling out with the other.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN