

# **C.A.W. Manning and Academic International Relations**

By David Long

Professor, The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs  
Carleton University  
Canada

[david\\_long@carleton.ca](mailto:david_long@carleton.ca)

© 2013 by David Long

In the early 1950s, Professor C.A.W. Manning, now into the third decade of his tenure as head of the department of international relations (IR) at the London School of Economics (LSE), was at something of a turning point in his career. Having been at the forefront of studies of international affairs in the U.K. before the war, recently things had not been going so well. Some work for Chatham House during the war had ended rather disastrously without publication. Manning had been a leading light of the British branch of the International Studies Conference (ISC), the League-era international organization of academic international relations, but this was now stumbling to its demise. Furthermore, his native South Africa was in the process of alienating itself from the international community and the Commonwealth in particular through its adoption of apartheid.

At this time Manning embarked on a course of action that was to be the basis of his renown in the IR profession.<sup>1</sup> Turning away from his previous work on law in the international system, collective security and international sanctions, Manning picked up the baton from the much-missed S.H. Bailey in defense of the academic study of IR. His advocacy of the idea that international relations should be taught as a separate academic discipline appeared in his short UNESCO-published book on IR, but this was to be more or less the last hurrah for the ISC.<sup>2</sup>

With the collapse of international and European efforts to advance the cause, Manning retrenched to his home turf at the LSE.

Unfortunately for this strategy, austerity in the U.K. in the wake of the Second World War did not create an environment conducive to expansion or experimentation in the tertiary education sector. Thus the prospects for the growth or consolidation of Manning's conception of the study of international relations seemed altogether rather bleak. In this context he turned to the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) for support.

Manning already had a long-established relationship with the RF. Before his time at the LSE, when he was still an Oxford don, he had been a Laura Spelman Fellow at Harvard for the academic year 1925-1926.<sup>3</sup> The RF had sponsored the activities of the ISC in the 1930s, in which Manning had been a consistent participant. And since 1936, a good portion of his salary was in effect paid for by the RF. Manning had been the somewhat surprising successor to Philip Noel Baker in the Cassel Chair of International Relations in 1930. With the stock market crash however, Cassel confirmed they would not renew the funding, so the LSE went in search of another donor. By 1936 Montague Burton had offered a substantial sum, though still less than was required. The LSE Director at the time sought supplemental support from the RF, but this being denied, instead, redirected funds from the general grant the LSE received.<sup>4</sup>

Manning was, as a consequence of this decade-long relationship, perhaps if not confident, then at least hopeful that support might be forthcoming. He submitted a proposal for five-year funding of a number of fellowships to support and develop the talent needed for teaching international relations in the U.K., the reasoning being that at present LSE was a lonely outpost in teaching the subject. Written initially in September 1952, and submitted to the RF two years later, the proposal itself was rather brief and informal compared to the expectations attending

such applications today. The character of its presentation and the technical questions about the permissibility of such funding were to be only a couple of the difficulties that the proposal faced.

The challenges included Manning himself. While supportive of the proposal in principle, officers at the RF simply were not convinced that Manning was the man for the job intellectually. First of all, his advancing age suggested someone rather out of touch, while the more positive assessment of Manning's junior colleague, Martin Wight, was an invidious comparison rather than reason to support Manning's scheme. Second, the proposal arrived in the midst of moves to develop academic international relations, in particular, the contemporaneous RF-sponsored conference discussed in Nicolas Guilhot's edited collection, *The Invention of International Relations Theory*.<sup>5</sup> Manning's view of IR did not mesh well with American approaches and was considered by some eccentric. Finally, the lay of the academic land at LSE was a good deal more hostile than helpful. The reception at the LSE of the RF's queries of whether the School supported its own professor's submission was decidedly cool and prompted efforts to devise an alternative scheme.

On Dean Rusk's prompting, Kenneth Thompson sought the views of a number of senior American scholars as to the caliber of Manning and his proposal.<sup>6</sup> The resulting assessments—from Richard Snyder, Arnold Wolfers, Frederick Dunn, Harold Sprout, William T.R. Fox, and Percy Corbett—make interesting reading in themselves, though they paint more of a personal picture of Manning's career, rather than being indicative of broader developments in international relations on each side of the Atlantic. Overall, the assessments pay tribute to an acute mind, but also suggest that Manning could be obtuse and his arguments obscure. Arnold Wolfers claimed that he had not seen any work by Manning or indeed references to any since the 1930s, although he acknowledged that “he had a fine mind and original ideas.”<sup>7</sup> Fox, in an

interview with Thompson, on October 11, 1954, is recorded as having suggested that “CAWM’s lack of productivity was partly due to the fact that he has a very high order intellect, which makes him formulate new questions before settling the original ones.”

Percy Corbett stated that “With the greatest admiration for his critical acumen, I have usually found him so balanced between the negative and positive aspects of any problem that it was impossible for him to say yes or no without a flock of qualifications.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, Frederick S. Dunn suggested that “he is a man of some definite talents, but there has been a logical block to his thinking ... He was prone to get lost in endless logical spinning of ideas which did not come out anywhere in particular.”<sup>9</sup> Others, while liking him personally, found him ineffective.

Sadly, Manning’s own words betray him in this regard. In the note that initiated the proposal he raised a number of important issues, but the one-sentence opening paragraph sums up the problem with his writing style and form of argument: “The purpose of this note is to make available in concise form the main considerations affecting the question in which it is suggested that some help from outside sources might, at this moment, be opportunely afforded to the particular centre of higher education in which, uniquely among such institutions in the United Kingdom, the subject of international relations has, as an independent discipline, been given as yet its most effective development.”<sup>10</sup> Yes, this was Manning trying to be concise! By contrast, the impression of Martin Wight was overwhelmingly positive and there are numerous references to this effect by Thompson and also Rusk.<sup>11</sup> Had Wight advanced the proposal, it would have received a good deal more happy reception from the RF. Indeed, some of the correspondence hint that this is what was hoped might happen. It was not to be, but in any case, the comparison reflected poorly on Manning and contributed to a sense of waiting for succession to occur.

However, it was not only Manning's scholarship that was a problem. It was also the very format for international relations that he hoped to promulgate through the proposal that troubled some. While Harold Sprout considered Manning's approach a good representative of a systematic multidisciplinary perspective, he was "not wholly clear as to Manning's concept of international relations as a separate academic discipline."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, this conception did run contrary to that being developed at the same time in the conference on IR theory, which placed IR as a subspecies of politics and the subject of a variant of political theory.

In light of the decidedly mixed reports, Rusk approached the Director of the LSE, Alexander Carr-Saunders, to get an impression of the School's view of the proposal, writing on October 8, 1954, that "Professor Manning is known to us as an interesting and provocative, if controversial, scholar," but noting, on November 12, 1954, that there was "a distressing difference of view about the quality of his scholarship and the value of his contribution." Rusk indicated therefore that the RF was unlikely to fund him alone, but would consider a variation on the proposal.

Carr-Saunders' response was initially cautious and then blunt. On November 19, 1954, he told Rusk that, "there is very little support in the School for Professor Manning's thesis that international relations constitute a separate academic discipline." Instead, he pointed to scholarship that had been, and continued to be, conducted in the School in international law, international history, and international trade, including the work of such prominent figures as Herscht Lauterpacht and C.K. Webster. Carr-Saunders liked the idea of a scheme to bring these studies together. The characterization of the proposal as international relations rather than international studies was an obstacle for Carr-Saunders, however, since he interpreted this as indicating a preference for a scheme emanating from the international relations department.

Having been assured that this was not in fact a requirement, Carr-Saunders pitched a multidisciplinary project involving four departments directly concerned with international affairs, covering the subjects International Relations, International Law, International Economics, and International History, and in addition various comparative and other related studies conducted in the departments of Government, Geography, and Anthropology.<sup>13</sup> In conversation with Thompson, Carr-Saunders suggested that, “discussions on the original proposal from C.A.W. Manning had permitted the faculty at LSE to reassess work in the field of international studies.”<sup>14</sup> This had long been needed and was a good thing, but was now being hindered, he claimed, by Manning who “apparently resents the fact that he has not been placed in the center of these deliberations.” As a result, Manning had initially been excluded from discussions in the School. Instead, the very broad conception of the field in the revised proposal reflected the influence, among others, of Professor of Public Administration, W.A. Robson, and thus included Robson’s own specialism, the comparative study of cities.<sup>15</sup>

While he seems for the most part to have been kept out of the loop of these discussions, Manning became progressively more wary and doubtful as to the prospects of his proposal being accepted. Though worried about support in the LSE committee charged to deal with it, Manning wrote to Thompson on November 14, 1954, in his whimsical style that, “Operation mustard seed is, I understand, to be laid this coming Wednesday.” After the meeting, his doubts had increased, manifested in the missive to Thompson on November 27, 1954, in which, while acknowledging the interest of a number of departments in the proposal, Manning decried their grasping influence upon it: “What I should like soon to discover is whether the September memorandum, and the case it argues, is what we are any longer supposed to be discussing at all.” It was not, in fact, as Carr-Saunders’ correspondence with Rusk indicates. Returning to the seed metaphor and

reflecting the multidisciplinary impetus of the forces ranged against him in the School, Manning resigned himself to the notion that, “Maybe in the end we must pass up our plate for all-this-and-mustard-too!”

As the amended, effectively alternative, proposal was developed, Manning acquiesced despite being far from happy with it, because he hoped some of his original proposal might be achieved along the way and acknowledged it was after all not “a monopoly of ours.”<sup>16</sup>

Manning’s final observation was typically eccentric yet pointed: “‘Operation shopping-list’ is now on the move. It is my intention, if permitted, to contribute, however possibly, to its success. ... Meanwhile I know that, in now transferring my inventiveness to a new ‘Operation salvage,’ I shall not, by you, be deemed unfaithful to the memory of ‘mustard seed,’ on whose tomb I shall put flowers every day.”<sup>17</sup>

The RF did end up funding fellowships per the LSE plan though there were significant doubts from the outset as to the program’s efficacy. Only a small part, as Manning had feared, went directly to IR, though the program did support subsequent pillars of U.K. IR, Jack Spence and Peter Lyon, among others. By 1962 it was not clear that it would be renewed and anyway would await Manning’s replacement, though by this time, it would not be Wight, because he had left IR at the LSE for European Studies at the University of Sussex.<sup>18</sup>

This is perhaps a small chapter in the history of academic international relations. However, the discussions over and resistance to Manning’s proposal crystallized the problems that were endemic in IR scholarship at the time and that are still with us today, regarding interdisciplinary as opposed to disciplinary scholarship, and the place of an autonomous study of international relations among the social sciences. For instance, writing to Thompson on November 27, 1954, Manning emphasized the difference between two meanings of international

relations, the academic study and the domain being studied, or as he called them, the subject and the subject matter. The distinction was strategically important for Manning, because it underpinned his criticism of the amendment of his proposal. As Carr-Saunders had pointed out, a number of academic departments studied elements of the international; for Manning, this was beside the point if your purpose was to develop a coherent approach to studying the subject. While Manning was advocating for his personal vision of academic international relations, Dean Rusk expressed his frustration with the sort of interdisciplinary approach that the LSE ultimately developed. On December 2, 1954, after a trustees meeting, he wrote to Carr-Saunders, “we have no ready answer as to what constitutes ‘international relations’ or how such work should be organized within a college or university.” However, he was “skeptical about proposals for interdisciplinary marriages” and pointed to the challenges as well: “We would be interested in knowing, of course, whether you have had any more success than we have had over here in fusing the contributions of the international lawyer, the economist, the historian, and the politician into a fruitful partnership for the study of international affairs.”

This small chapter—for many, surely less than a footnote—manifests several threads in the weave of IR scholarship. First of all, it is a coda to interwar conversations about the disciplinary character of IR. At the same time, it is a parallel universe to the 1954 conference on the theory of international relations. Furthermore, it is an immediate preface to RF support for the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, and adds context to the story of Manning’s exclusion from that group.<sup>19</sup> In the midst of the various discussions regarding the development of academic international relations after the Second World War stood a combative and difficult South African with very decided views on the status and character of international



relations.<sup>20</sup> These views did not win the day at the time, but discussions around them shaped the way that international relations have been studied ever since.

*Editor's Note:* This research report is presented here with the author's permission but should not be cited or quoted without the author's consent.

Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online is a periodic publication of the Rockefeller Archive Center. Edited by Erwin Levold, Research Reports Online is intended to foster the network of scholarship in the history of philanthropy and to highlight the diverse range of materials and subjects covered in the collections at the Rockefeller Archive Center. The reports are drawn from essays submitted by researchers who have visited the Archive Center, many of whom have received grants from the Archive Center to support their research.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and are not intended to represent the Rockefeller Archive Center.

## ENDNOTES:

---

<sup>1</sup> Hidemi Suganami, "C.A.W. Manning and the Study of International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 27: 1 (2001); Alan James, "Manning, Charles Anthony Woodward (1894–1978)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> C.A.W. Manning, *The University Teaching of the Social Sciences: International Relations*. Paris, France: UNESCO, 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Manning's Fellowship Record, Folder 548, Box 52, Series 3, RG 3, Foreign Fellowships Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (LSRM), Rockefeller Foundation Archives (RF), Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Tracy B. Kittredge regarding the Provision for Chair in International Relations London School of Economics, November 12, 1934, Folder 940, Box 71, Series 401S, RG 1.1, RF, RAC.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolas Guilhot, *The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, The Rockefeller Foundation and the 1954 Conference on Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent references are to Folder 486, Box 56, Series 401S, RG 1.2, RF, RAC.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Thompson, October 1, 1954.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Thompson, September 30, 1954.

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Thompson, September 30, 1954.

<sup>10</sup> Manning's note that initiated a proposal written in New York, September 2, 1952, and attached to a letter John D. Rockefeller 3rd from Ralph Townley, April 29, 1953.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, e.g., interview with Alexander Carr-Saunders, May 2, 1955.

<sup>12</sup> Letter to Thompson, September 27, 1954.

<sup>13</sup> Carr-Saunders to Rusk, March 8, 1955.

<sup>14</sup> Interview, May 2, 1955.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson interview with W.A. Robson, May 4, 1955.

<sup>16</sup> Manning to Thompson, February 20, 1955.

<sup>17</sup> Manning to Thompson, July 13, 1955.

<sup>18</sup> L.C. DeVinney diary, entry regarding a meeting with Sidney Caine, May 1, 1962.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School*. U.K.: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Bentley, *The Life and Thought of Herbert Butterfield: History, Science and God*. U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2011.