

At a Meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences on October 1, 2013, the following Minute was placed upon the records.

DANIEL BELL

Born: May 10, 1919

Died: January 25, 2011

Daniel Bell, a sociologist whose analysis of the end of ideology, post-industrial society, and the cultural contradictions of capitalism shaped the perspectives of a generation of intellectuals and political leaders, was a professor at Harvard from 1969 to 1990. Until his death, he remained the Henry Ford II Professor of the Social Sciences, *Emeritus*, and took a lively part in Cambridge intellectual life.

Bell became an academic late in life, following a distinguished career as a serious journalist, editor, and public intellectual. He was a voracious reader with an amazing breadth of knowledge, covering Marxism, European intellectual history, Jewish studies, the labor movement, literary criticism, higher education, and culture as well as the classic works of sociology. From 1948 to 1959 he was labor editor of *Fortune* magazine. He was earlier managing editor of the socialist weekly the *New Leader* and editor of *Common Sense*. With Irving Kristol he founded and edited for some years the quarterly the *Public Interest*.

Bell was born on New York City's Lower East Side, then an enormous concentration of poor Jewish immigrants. He lost his father at eight months. His mother tried to eke out a living as a garment worker. As a teenager Bell pushed racks of clothing along Seventh Avenue from the sewing contractors to the manufacturer's showrooms. He studied at Stuyvesant High School, a public school for bright students who passed entrance examinations, and the City College of New York, one of the very few American institutions of higher education that did not charge tuition. In the 1930s City College was a center of intellectual debate where Bell honed his skills as an articulate advocate, deadly serious but with a touch of humor, in debates about fundamental social issues ranging from the depression, class struggle, war, and politics. Among the many intellectuals who graduated from City College in his day were Seymour Martin Lipset and Nathan Glazer, who later became sociology colleagues at Harvard.

At 13 Bell became an active socialist, and shortly after graduating from City College in his early twenties he became managing editor of the *New Leader*, which was fiercely opposed to Communism. Bell became a central figure in New York's intellectual life, wrote widely for various publications, and became active in the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an international organization devoted to fighting Communist influence in the arts and cultural life. It sponsored journals open to a wide range of non-Communist opinion and criticism, including *Der Monat* (in German) and *Encounter* (in London), both founded by City College classmates of Bell, Irving Kristol, and Melvin Lasky.

In *The End of Ideology*, a collection of essays and papers published in 1960, Bell argued that major ideological conflict was at an end in the wake of the collapse of Fascism and the intellectual emptiness of contemporary Communism and Marxism, and that political life in the future would be

defined more by conflict over the bounds of a social democratic service state than by major ideological controversy. The thesis was sharply disputed, but Bell defended his position in many subsequent editions of the book, the most recent published in the year 2000, by which time his thesis appeared even more prescient.

In 1959 Bell became a professor of sociology at Columbia University, and only in the following year was he granted his Ph.D. there. While at Columbia he wrote *Reforming of General Education* (1968), which was commissioned by Dean Jacques Barzun as an overall guide to the aims of a university in providing a liberal education. The student disorders at Columbia in 1968 had raised for him, as for others, a serious conflict between his attachment to the radicalism of his youth and his respect for the university as a major institution. He was invited to Harvard through an initiative begun by Dean McGeorge Bundy to bring to Harvard broad intellectuals, including David Riesman and Erik Erickson, who were concerned with society far beyond the range of single disciplines.

At Harvard he published the two major works for which he is best known: *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973) and *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976). These two books define some of the major tendencies of our times: the rise of information- and service-based societies succeeding the age of industrial mass production, and a distinctive contemporary crisis of capitalist society as its driving motivations stimulate the creation and expansion of a culture that undermines its moral basis. These books, like his others, have often been reprinted with additional introductions and epilogues dealing with subsequent events.

In the 1970s Bell was defined as a “neo-conservative” along with Kristol, Daniel P. Moynihan, Nathan Glazer, and others connected with the journal the *Public Interest*, which was then raising some cautions over the unanticipated consequences of the large social programs of the 1960s that had brought the United States closer to the welfare states of Europe. But Bell resisted the label; as he often said and wrote, he was a socialist in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture.

Bell received honorary degrees from Harvard and 17 other universities. In 1999 Bell was given the Tocqueville Prize (the second American sociologist, after David Riesman, to receive it). He received the Talcott Parsons Prize for the Social Sciences from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Sociological Association in 1992, but Bell was no typical American sociologist. He did not participate in its strong positivist drift. As the obituarist of the *Boston Globe* wrote, “[Bell] was a proud anachronism: displaying a rare intellectual ambition, assimilative power, and range of interests.”

Bell wrote and edited many other books including *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (1952), *The New American Right* (1955), and *Toward the Year 2000* (1968).

Bell left behind his wife, Pearl Kazin, a literary critic, a daughter, Jordy, who before retirement was an academic administrator, and a son, David, one of the leading American historians of France and a professor at Princeton University.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ezra Vogel
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