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1996

Preface

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Recommended Citation

James E. Hickey Jr, *Preface* (1996)

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Preface

No question has more impact on people than government and the structure of government. The form of government and the exercise of government power directly affects individual and group rights of citizens, the correlative duties of government bodies, the allocation of energy and natural resources, the quality of the environment, the distribution of wealth, the nature of education, the expression of culture from language to religion, and the economic and political relations of states.

At the brink of the twenty-first century, the rationales for particular government structures are being actively and vigorously examined and reexamined as never before. That intense governance scrutiny has occurred in the 1990s in large part because of the end of the cold war, the demise of communism, the rise of democracy, the emergence of the global marketplace, the movement toward privatization, and the exponential increase in the amount and availability of information.

These factors have resulted in changes and calls for changes both in internal government arrangements among local, regional, and national governments and in external government relations among states.

Within states, people are questioning existing internal relationships among national government and subnational or local governments. These internal distributions of power involve fundamental questions of federalism in the broad sense. Recent challenges to distributions of government power are occurring with varying degrees of intensity around the world in such states as Canada, the former Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, India, Italy, Mexico, Somalia, South Africa, the former Yugoslavia, as well as the former Soviet Union and the United States.

Externally, states are also altering their governmental relations with one

another through the creation of what may be loosely termed international federal institutions charged with special or broad powers over the member states. This is especially reflected in evolving regional organizations like the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

This book presents an interdisciplinary, panoramic picture drawn by historians, comparative scholars, economists, bankers, political scientists, lawyers, and government officials of the struggle of the two great contrasting world powers (the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A.) in the early 1990s to deal with questions of allocating government power. Both powers were, and are today, struggling to decide how best to distribute government power. The Soviet Union dramatically ceased to exist and was replaced by independent states loosely associated in a Commonwealth of Independent States. The United States at the same time was experiencing, and continues to experience, a movement to devolve federal power to the fifty states and thousands of local governments.

The interdisciplinary approach taken by this book on a specific set of issues represents the sort of new dialogue and broad base of information needed to analyze the form and effectiveness of government structures in the future. This book does not propose solutions so much as it affords an opportunity to appreciate the myriad perspectives by which one may approach solutions to governance. It also records some of the hopes, expectations, and reservations behind those perspectives.

James E. Hickey, Jr.

NOTE

I would like to thank Laura A. Mongelli and Joanna Balaskas for their competent and diligent work on this book.