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## BOOK REVIEWS

### Review Essays

**The Geography of Public Finance: Welfare under Fiscal Federalism and Local Government Finance.** By R. J. Bennet. (New York: Methuen, 1980. Pp. x + 498. \$39.95.)

**Political Studies from Spatial Perspectives: Anglo-American Essays on Political Geography.** Edited by Alan D. Burnett and Peter J. Taylor. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1981. Pp. xv + 519. \$35.95.)

**Geography of Elections.** By Peter J. Taylor and Ronald J. Johnston. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979. Pp. 526. \$42.00.)

I suspect that for most of us geography is identified with such grammar-school tasks as recognizing countries by their outlines on a map and memorizing the capitals of the states. The 3 books under review, written or edited by prominent British political geographers, demonstrate the totally misleading nature of any stereotypic view of contemporary geography derived from childhood experiences with what was then labeled geography. Modern human geography is a behavioral science concerned with both describing and explaining patterns of social behavior and interaction in a spatial context. As such, geographers have been reaching out to other social-science disciplines to reexamine areas of traditional concern to these disciplines from a geographical perspective, i.e. with an emphasis on such spatial factors as both dependent and independent variables. Two specializations, political geography and economic geography, are now undergoing a considerable renaissance within the field of geography. Moreover, recent work by public-choice-minded economists on issues involving the intersection of economics and politics such as the causes of growth in government expenditures, the optimal size and composition of political subunits, and the appropriate division of labor between different levels of government have also attracted the attention of a number of geographers including R. J. Bennett, whose book *Geography of Public Finance* is one of those under review.

Political geography may be characterized as having four principal divisions—classifications almost entirely invented by this reviewer.

*The study of traditional geopolitics.* This area deals with global issues (historical patterns of

trade, migration, and conquest, and the growth and decline of states and empires), the geographic distribution of natural resources (international law affecting settlement of jurisdictional and resource claims, e.g. the law of the sea), and military geography. Also falling under this rubric are issues of international economic and political development, e.g. North-South conflicts. For example, a number of geographers have recently been influenced by dependency theorists (see the essay by Peter J. Taylor in the Burnett and Taylor volume).

*The study of the influence of environmental factors on political behavior.* Geographers, for example, have attempted to trace the influence of topography and climate on patterns of social organization and to define natural political entities based on geographic considerations, although the naive determinism of some early works is now held up to scorn. Often within a framework of strong environmental determinism, geographers have done a vast number of regional studies analogous in many ways to area studies within political science. Related to these areas of investigation is the study of the mental maps of individuals to see how these correlate with physical space and features of the environment, and how they vary among individuals of different education, classes, and backgrounds (see the special issue "Politics and Geography" of the *International Political Science Review*, vol. 1, no. 4 [1980] for related work, primarily by political scientists).

*The study of the geography of elections.* This area has dramatically expanded in importance within the past decade, largely through the pioneering work (done both singly and jointly in various combinations) of P. Taylor, G. Gudgin, and R. J. Johnston. It may be characterized as having three focuses: the geography of voting, where the purpose is to describe and explain spatial regularities in voting behavior in terms of demographic and attitudinal as well as topographic variables; contextual modelling, which deals with interpersonal influences and localized media effects on voting behavior; and the geography of representation, which investigates how votes are translated into seats given geographically defined constituencies with specified electoral procedures.

*The study of the spatial distribution of taxation and expenditure patterns within a given polity.* Issues of internal economic development, including interregional or rural-urban conflicts, and issues of regional and ethnic autonomy and/or secession also fall under this general rubric.

*Geography of Elections* by Peter Taylor and Ronald Johnston is a superb introduction to the third classification listed and covers each of the three basic subtopics (geography of voting, contextual modelling, and geography of representation) in considerable detail and with at least as much technical sophistication and substantive feel as any comparable work done by political scientists. Most of its examples are drawn from the U.K. and the U.S., and Taylor and Johnston are quite familiar with the relevant political science literature.

The fourth classification, the spatial distribution of taxation and expenditure patterns, is the focus of R. J. Bennett's *The Geography of Public Finance*. Bennett deals with issues such as the fiscal crisis of cities, the resources-needs gap in local governments, the problem of declining regions, devolution and separatist movements, and intergovernmental revenue sharing and division of labor as that currently in vogue in the U.S. under the rubric of the "new fiscal federalism." Bennett, a British geographer trained in part in the U.S. and currently a lecturer at Cambridge, draws his examples primarily from the U.K. and the U.S., but also discusses data from Canada, Australia, Germany, and several other European countries. Bennett offers a huge mine of useful data compilations and is exhaustive in his inventories of the costs and benefits of alternative policies. He offers a rebuttal to the economic analyses common in the public finance literature which either ignore the importance of spatial factors or which argue for national policies without local or regional variation with respect to redistributive questions, but local governmental autonomy with regard to allocational issues. The book's great strength lies in comparative (cross-national and longitudinal) descriptions of the geographic nature of the public fisc and in comprehensive discussion of the theoretical links between geography and political economy.

Bennett is familiar with the recent public finance literature and tries, sometimes successfully, to mesh theory and data. As is true for many intelligent noneconomists who have studied economic approaches to political economy, Bennett is cognizant of the limitations of the economic models he surveys. However the "needs-based" analysis he proposes in chapter 5, although far less fuzzy than the table shown might suggest, seems to this reviewer too ill-defined to be useful as a practical alternative. Thus,

Bennett's lofty normative ambitions for his work are left unfulfilled.

There are a number of illuminating discussions in Bennett. For example he offers a useful discussion and critique of the public finance analysis of income-based jurisdictional segregation. James Buchanan, in classic work done in the mid-1960s on the theory of clubs, argued that separate jurisdictions will lead to allocations of public goods which vary from place to place according to the collective preferences of the people living within each jurisdiction. The Tiebout model offered by Charles Tiebout in "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures" (*Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 64 [1956], pp. 416-24) posits that individuals will vote with their feet and migrate from one local jurisdiction to another with a mix of public goals which better accords with individual preference and/or with a lower tax rate. If Tiebout effects occur, they will lead to jurisdictions with socially homogeneous populations. From a pure economic standpoint, to interfere with such regional differentials is to reduce economic efficiency in that resources will be allocated otherwise than through a mechanism relating supply and demand through price to scarcity. Thus "both Tiebout migration and geographical variation of public service are essential to allow market principles to determine the allocation of public goods" (p. 37, emphasis added). Bennett (pp. 37-39) then goes on to point out the limitations, both theoretical and practical, of the Tiebout-Buchanan defense of localism. In particular, "differences in income between jurisdictions limit the ability of some areas to purchase social goods" (p. 37); tax-rate incidence will vary across otherwise identical individuals in different jurisdictions; and most importantly "increased spatial polarization between income groups . . . may be combined with social and ethnic factors to also lead to increased polarization between racial, religious, and cultural groups" (p. 37). Because of these and other limitations of the localist model, it is, according to Bennett, "generally accepted that the allocation of public goods cannot be left entirely to local collective action."

Bennett, however, is not an advocate of purely central planning. He points out that centralist planning may be insensitive to variations in local community needs. Moreover, if some jurisdictions are poorer than others, then centralized policies calling for equalization of benefits will require redistribution of wealth, which pits class against class and/or region against region.

In even stronger fashion, Bennett rejects the view of R. A. Musgrave and other public finance economists that "redistribution is best approached as a national policy" and that "local taxes should not be progressive with income, nor

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should there be local welfare and transfer payments" (p. 41). Rather, Bennett argues that some redistributive policies are best approached at a local or regional level in conjunction with national policies because "needs, costs, and preference for public goods and the ability to pay for them vary as a function of geographical location" (p. 42), and needs can be thought of as region-specific as well as (or even more than) individual-specific. Bennett considers traditional public finance arguments against allowing local government discretionary authority, e.g. the claim that local governmental fiscal policies undermine economic stability by contracting in a recession and expanding in times of prosperity rather than following a Keynesian countercyclical strategy. He rejects a number of these arguments as lacking in empirical support when examined in light of post-World War II data.

As for regional development, according to Bennett "it is now widely accepted that initial patterns of regional income inequality contain the seeds of continued growth in disparities in the future, as capital and labour resources are attracted to the wealthy areas at the expense of the poorer in a continuing and cumulative process. . . . [t]he exclusion from distribution policies of spatial aspects allows the writing-off of the social and the human infrastructure of urban tracts and whole regions" (p. 44). Thus Bennett asserts "to ignore . . . geographical factors will exacerbate both spatial and personal inequities." Bennett points out that the perfect worker and capital mobility, static technology models common in the economic literature, are too unrealistic to be of much value in resolving issues of regional development policy, and often wrongly lead to the foregone conclusion that a governmental policy toward regional development should not exist and that economic outcomes are best left to the guidance of the market's invisible hand (pp. 67-73).

While I have nothing but praise for Taylor and Johnston's *Geography of Elections, Political Studies from Spatial Perspectives*, edited by Taylor and Alan Burnett, is a typical conference-inspired volume, i.e. a mishmash. Its chief virtue is as a sampler of the current work of political geographers. As with most symposium volumes, many articles are likely to be of interest only to area specialists (e.g., Anthony Lemon's "The Geography of Voting Patterns in South African Elections, 1974-77," or John A. Brohman and David B. Knight's "Some Geopolitical Aspects of the Conflict in Namibia/South-West Africa"). Moreover, in my view at least one of the articles is essentially devoid of original content (Robert D. Sack's "Territorial Bases of Power"), and several of the review essays are of more interest for the intellectual history they offer than for any substan-

tive insights the work they cite appears to provide. Nonetheless, a number of outstanding articles are included: J. Clarke Archer's review essay "Public Choice Paradigms in Political Geography"; Colin H. William's essay on "Identity through Autonomy: Ethnic Separation in Quebec" which discusses the divergence between territorial and ethnic claims to autonomy in Canada; John O'Loughlin's sophisticated analysis of contextual effects in voting, "The Neighborhood Effect in Urban Voting Surfaces: A Cross-National Analysis"; and Gwynn Royley's insightful historical review of Jewish attitudes toward Israel, "The Land in Israel," which also contains a number of useful maps on Israeli territorial boundaries from the twelfth century B.C. to the present.

Contemporary geographers doing political geography or economic geography are very familiar with the research and disciplinary tools that they seek to adapt and extend from economics or politics. Given the high level of theoretical and empirical sophistication of much of the recent work in political geography, especially work on the geography of elections and on the geography of public finance, it would behoove political scientists to become familiar with the renaissance that has been taking place in political geography, work directly relevant to central questions of political science, public administration, and political theory.

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**The Politics of Informal Justice: Vol. 1, The American Experience; Vol. 2, Comparative Studies.** Edited by Richard L. Abel. (New York: Academic Press, 1981 and 1982. Pp. ix + 335 and x + 338. \$29.50 each.)

**The Passive Judiciary: Prosecutorial Discretion and the Guilty Plea.** By Abraham Goldstein. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981. Pp. 104. \$12.95.)

There is no little irony in contemporary debates over an "imperial judiciary" and "litigious society," for the overwhelming number of disputes are resolved without recourse to formal, legal institutions. An extremely high percentage of the innumerable decisions made by governmental institutions and public officials are never appealed or reviewed. The vast majority of those disputes that reach legal forums are actually concluded not via the process of adjudication, but instead by mediation or negotiation within the shadows of litigation. No less crucially, the intricate combination and dynamic interplay of formal and informal institutions *cum* processes inexorably fails to