Public Policy and Politics

Series Editors: Colin Fudge and Robin Hambleton

Important shifts are taking place in the nature of public policy-making and government at both the central and local level. Increasing financial pressures, the struggle to maintain public services, the emergence of new areas of concern, such as employment and economic development, and increasing partisanship in local politics, are all creating new strains but at the same time opening up new possibilities.

The series is designed to provide up-to-date, comprehensive and authoritative analyses of public policy and politics in practice. Public policy to us involves the implicit or explicit mediation of social and economic forces by the state, is determined by political action as a result of conflict or consensus, and leads to specific patterns of response and activity by government, by non-governmental and private agencies, and by the public.

Two key themes are stressed throughout the series. First, the books link discussion of the substance of policy to the politics of the policy-making process. Second, each volume aims to bridge theory and practice. The books capture the dynamics of public policy-making but, equally important, aim to increase understanding of practice by locating these discussions within differing theoretical perspectives. Given the complexity of the processes and the issues involved, there is a strong emphasis on inter-disciplinary approaches.

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Every effort has been made to make the books in the series as readable and usable as possible. Our hope is that it will be of value to all those interested in public policy and politics – whether as students, practitioners or academics. We shall be satisfied if the series helps in a modest way to improve understanding and debate about public policy and politics during the 1980s.

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The Tools of Government

Christopher C. Hood

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Acknowledgements

For a short book, this has been a longish time in the making, and I have many debts to acknowledge.

I suppose that there are three ideal conditions for writing a book: the opportunity to work out one's ideas periodically with others who are 'on the same wavelength'; a place to write which combines mental stimulation with relative freedom from day-to-day pressures; and an understanding and enthusiastic publisher. Lots of books – and good ones, too – somehow get written without some, or even any, of these conditions. But for this book I was lucky enough to enjoy all three.

When it came to discussing ideas, I am chiefly indebted to Andrew Dunsire, with whom I first began to think seriously about this subject when I worked at the University of York from 1977 to 1979. He was also of great help subsequently, and he read an earlier draft of this book, making valuable suggestions for improvement and allowing me to incorporate them. If the finished product does not meet his exacting standards, the fault is certainly mine, not his.

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Bielefeld, August 1982 CHRISTOPHER HOOD

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Guide to Reading the Book

First, be warned. This book will *not* tell you everything you ever wanted to know about government. The quick imaginations of political and other scientists have contrived any number of ways in which 'government' can be explored and understood, and this book does not even try to catalogue, let alone synthesise, those approaches. It is a deliberately one-eyed approach to its subject.

What the book *does* aim to do is to help you to look at 'government' in one rather particular and unfamiliar way – as a set of basic tools or instruments which have to be continually drawn upon, combined in varying mixes and applied to the staggering multiplicity of tasks which modern government is (or feels) called upon to undertake. Many discussions of government activity include vague references to, or instances of, government's 'instruments', but very rarely is any attempt made to lay these out as a group for the layperson to see. That is what this book aims to do. It has been kept as brief and simple as possible, with the needs of the general reader and the student in mind rather than those of the emeritus professor.

Of course, everyone knows that you cannot really lay out government's tools in exactly the same way that a joiner or a plumber could do with the instruments he uses. Government's 'tools' are not directly observable. To 'see' them requires interpretation, and the spectacles needed are those of administrative analysis. The interpretation offered here is necessarily a personal one, though it has some resemblance to those produced by others. Certainly it is not to be taken as the last word on the subject.

Every book has chapters which can be skipped at a pinch. Don't skip Chapter 1. It is the key to the book. It sketches out the basic elements of government's tool-kit, related to government's resources and functions, and this needs to be read carefully in order to understand what follows. Some jargon is inescapable in a book like this. Substitute your own if you like, if it helps. The names used are only labels.

After that, the book could in principle be read in any order. It is laid

out in the way that it is because it assumes that most readers will not be familiar with the operation of government in any detail, and will therefore want to see the simple framework of Chapter 1 fleshed out and discussed (which is what happens in Parts I and II) before going on to different questions. On the other hand, if you are really impatient to get to the 'payoff line', you may want to move straight to the chapters in Part III which set out some of the applications and implications which can be derived from looking at government activities through the lenses used here. At the beginning of each Part, you will find a short introduction explaining the framework of that set of chapters.