The Stability of the International Monetary System

Also by W. M. Scammell

International Monetary Policy (2nd edition)

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International Trade and Payments

International Monetary Policy: Bretton Woods and After

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W. M. Scammell

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First published 1987

Published by
MACMILLAN EDUCATION LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Scammell, W. M.

The stability of the international monetary system.

1. International finance

I. Title

332.4'5 HG3881

ISBN 978-0-333-38578-4

ISBN 978-1-349-18685-3 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-18685-3

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Preface

This book reflects an attempt to answer questions put to me by academic colleagues (who were not economists) at a time when the international financial system was exhibiting symptoms of strain and disintegration. Is it possible that the international monetary system could collapse? Through what processes could disintegration take place? My answer was given in an afternoon seminar with non-economist social scientists and a few curious economist colleagues, quick to pounce on errors of fact or reasoning.

The discussion which took place convinced me of two things which led me to persevere and rescue some of that discussion for a wider audience. First, the nexus of relationships which we call the international monetary system can be, and indeed is, best presented in a set of verbal propositions intelligible to most thinking people and free from the mathematical encumbrances with which, nowadays, economists try to glamorise their matter. Second, there is, in any event, an obligation to expound the problem in this way if one wishes to reach the audience one should reach, namely politicians, bankers, journalists, teachers and academics with time enough to stop being specialists.

I have presented the argument in book form much as I did in seminar, untidily and with some, perhaps pardonable, exaggeration. If it continues to evoke discussion it will have served its purpose.

Hamilton, Ontario
June 1986

W. M. S.