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Government and Politics of the United States

Second Edition

Nigel Bowles

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Dedicated to the memory of
Colin Moss
1954–1996
friend and scholar

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Preface to the Second Edition

My need for help has not diminished in the four years since publication of the first edition; nor, fortunately, has the propensity of my friends to supply it. Those whose generous support and advice I acknowledged in the "Preface to the First Edition", I warmly thank once more. In particular, I thank Desmond King both for his wise counsel regarding the new chapter entitled "The Politics of Cities and Suburbs", and for his generous support.

I am especially indebted to Katharine Ellis, my wife, whose love and intellectual support are essential and, happily, complete. Katharine tolerates the intrusion of American politics into her different intellectual world of nineteenth-century French cultural history with grace and understanding.

Several colleagues and students have kindly identified errors of omission, commission, or interpretation: I thank them all. I thank, too, the Principal and Fellows of St Anne's College, Oxford, and colleagues in the Politics Sub-faculty at Oxford, for a happy and stimulating environment in which to work. I am much indebted to my colleagues in the PPE School (Terry O'Shaughnessy, Alison Denham, Roger Crisp, Marc Stears, Lisa Finneran, Rob McMahon, and Paul Martin) for their generous support, as I am also to those many students at St Anne's College and other colleges in Oxford who have made me think harder about numerous questions in this book's large subject. For that, and for their intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm, I am most grateful. Vincent Wright, whose observations about the probable reception of the book's first edition proved characteristically astute, has again been a perceptive critic and supportive friend; so too has David Goldey, whose unwavering encouragement and constructive criticisms are invaluable. I am also grateful to my publisher Steven Kennedy for his professionalism.

Since the publication of the First Edition, Colin Moss, a close friend of integrity and warmth with whom I often talked about American history and politics, has died. This edition is affectionately dedicated to his memory, and a proportion of royalties earned from its sale will be donated to the Cancer Research Campaign.

Responsibility for errors of fact or interpretation remains with me alone.

Charlbury

NIGEL BOWLES

Note: With regard to the question of the use of pronouns, I have tried to ensure that the male pronoun is used only on those occasions when the

reference is to a man or to an office which has been held solely by men. Where the reference is to a woman, I use the female pronoun, and where it is made to an office which has been held both by men and women, the phrase “he or she” or “she or he” is used.

Preface to the First Edition and Acknowledgements

Shortly before the publication of his own textbook, my former supervisor directed me in colourful terms never to agree to write one of my own. Textbooks, he insisted, were regarded by colleagues who had written one of their own as unwelcome competition; by those who had not, as intrinsically unscholarly; and by students, degradingly and dispiritingly, as cribs. Many years later, a senior colleague asked me to write a textbook on United States government. Recalling the warning which I had received some years before from my supervisor, I demurred, but the pugnacious reply suggested that it would be unwise to decline. I warmly acknowledge my great debt to Vincent Wright, editor of the series in which this book appears, former supervisor, unembarrassed purveyor of conflicting advice, friend, and colleague. Without his early warning about the pitfalls of writing a textbook, I should have enjoyed his invitation to write it less than I did. Without his steady guidance and patience over the four years that the book has taken to complete, it would not have appeared. Without his unstinting intellectual support, it would be more deeply flawed than it is.

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Thanks are due to many others but there is space to mention just two. Both, sadly, have departed: Tony Allt, who first introduced me to American political history, and Philip Williams, whose knowledge and understanding of this vast subject were profound, and whose enthusiasm for it was inspirational.

Responsibility for errors of fact or interpretation is mine alone.

Charlbury

NIGEL BOWLES

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“The other main criticism . . . relates to the organs of government. To the outsider it looks almost incredibly inefficient. One wonders how decisions are ever reached at all. There is no clear hierarchy of authority. The different departments of the Government criticise one another in public and produce rival programmes. There is perpetual internecine warfare between prominent personalities. Individuals rise and fall in general esteem with bewildering rapidity. New groupings of administrative power and influence spring up every day. Members of the so-called Cabinet make public speeches containing urgent proposals which are not agreed as Government policy . . . Nothing is ever settled in principle. There is just endless debate and endless sitting around . . . Suddenly some drastic, clear-cut decision is reached, by what process one cannot understand, and all the talk seems to have gone for nothing, being a fifth wheel to the coach, the ultimate decision appearing to be largely independent of the immense *parlez-vous*, responsible and irresponsible that had preceded it. Nothing is secret, nothing confidential. The President laughed when I said his method of deceiving the enemy was apparently to publish so much vital information that they would not have the time to read it.”

(John Maynard Keynes, XXIII, 105-k, July 1941).

The United States: state boundaries

and major cities