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Summaries in English

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Summaries

Income distribution and the theory of public choice

by Hans van den Doel and Truus Grondma

This article deals with the question, what personal income distribution will be brought about by the institutions of a political democracy, assuming these institutions have the power to decide on that distribution. Following De Tocqueville's famous book 'Democracy in America' (1835) a lot of sociologists, political scientists and economists assumed that the output of a democratic system would be an egalitarian income distribution. However, this conclusion is rejected by the authors on the basis of a model of the democratic system which is developed in Hans van den Doel's 'Democracy and welfare economics' (Cambridge, 1979).

Firstly, the authors deny that a majority of individuals would strive after a radical levelling down of incomes. It is more likely that the individuals would pay attention to the negative effects of an equal distribution on economic growth (and hence on the growth of their own incomes) and on employment. In addition the poor individuals would hope for the chance to get rich themselves and they might be afraid of spoiling the pleasure of it beforehand.

Secondly, the authors argue that even if a majority did strive after a radical levelling down, it would not realize this aim. If the democratic decisions are based on voluntariness and uncommittedness (e.g. are implemented by way of 'concerted action'), the individuals, who constitute the majority, are caught up in a large Prisoners' Dilemma, in which their egalitarian aims will drown. If, on the contrary, the democratic decisions are binding on every individual, the majority is threatened by collective intransitivity, so that a majority decision on redistribution can suffer from cycling. Moreover, if this problem is solved — and the authors give some recommendations for such a solution — it is possible that the individuals with a median income would succeed in exploiting their electoral position as median voters. As a result, the income distribution would not benefit the poorest people, but the middle class only.

These conclusions are consistent with the empirical evidence given by R. W. Jackman ('Politics and social equality: a comparative analysis', New York, 1975) who rejected — in his own words — 'the hypothesis that political equality (as tapped by the measure of Democratic Performance) plays an important causal role in the generation of more egalitarian distributions of material rewards' (p. 199).

Summaries

A quantitative analysis of support for the National-Socialist Movement (NSB) from 1935 to 1940 in the City of Amsterdam

by O. Schmidt

Too many ecological analyses are patterned on the survey research model. However, the researcher must take advantage of the fact that ecological data often contain information as to their geographical distribution. In this article, an attempt is made to assess the influence of wealth, the proportion of Roman-Catholics and the proportion of Jews, on the proportion of votes for the Dutch National Socialist party in the elections of 1935 and 1939 in Amsterdam.

The data consist of census information on 51 city districts. First, the geographical location of the districts is ignored, as if the data came from an ordinary survey. Secondly, the spatial component is explored by means of computer mapping of regression analysis residuals, and by computing spatial autocorrelation coefficients. It turns out that (i) the NS vote strongly depends on the affluence of the districts (ii) structural factors are less important in 1939 than in 1935 in explaining the NS vote (iii) the impact of anti-Semitism on the NS vote grows stronger from 1935 to 1939.

Because Amsterdam was, geographically speaking, a rather homogeneous city, the specific geographical research techniques which are used do not have a clear advantage over the more common individualistic survey research techniques.

Administrative reorganization in the Netherlands

by J. N. Breunese and H. A. B. van der Heyden

The discussion about the reorganization of government in the Netherlands started after world war II.

Thirty-two years after the first reorganization proposal (1947) nothing has changed and the discussion goes on.

The Dutch governmental organization is rooted in the French system of ± 1800. In that system the local authorities had much influence and the role of the province was minute.

In 1848 a new constitution was adopted by which the Netherlands became a decentralized unitary state, a compromise between the liberal and the conservative view.

Based on this constitution the Municipal Corporations Act of 1851 expressed the role of local government. The liberal Thorbecke said that the local community is the school for democracy.

There was at that time no place for a strong national authority.

Since then, especially in the post-war period, the changes in society have influenced the governmental organization.

Central government has grown in the last 40 years, the number of departments has gone up to 15 and the Netherlands have become more and more centralized. The role of the local authorities, with their extensive tasks has changed. They were compelled to join hands in order to fulfill these tasks. The number of cooperation-relations exceeds 1500, which means that there has grown an informal fourth form of government, not subjected to the democratic rules of the other forms.

Up to now the discussion is mainly centered round this fourth form of government. Several proposals to solve the problems of the local authorities have been

discussed. E.g., the creating of districts, the forming of 44 regions (gewesten), 26/24 provinces and now 17 provinces.

With the last two solutions, the position of the Dutch province came in view. This article argues that on reorganizing government four elements must be taken into account:

- decentralization of national government tasks
- provincial regrouping
- local government regrouping and
- cooperation between local authorities.

Only when these 4 elements are examined and their interrelation is clear, it is possible to reorganise the governmental structure of this country.

Medewerkers aan dit nummer

Dr. P. R. Baehr was hoogleraar in de Leer der internationale betrekkingen aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam en is thans secretaris van de Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid.

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