
Preface to the first edition

A man who writes a book, thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them, and the publick to whom he appeals, must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions.

(Samuel Johnson)

This volume, which has been more than two years in the making and represents the collaborative effort of more than thirty scholars, is intended to encapsulate the field of public choice as it stands at the close of the twentieth century. While we are certainly not the first to attempt to do so, owing to the explosive growth of the literature over the past several decades, it has become nearly impossible to survey the theory and evidence of public choice comprehensively. Multiple perspectives by multiple authorities help to fill in the unavoidable gaps and to add the nuance necessary for a deeper understanding of what has been accomplished thus far and what questions remain unanswered.

This does not mean that we have not tried to be exhaustive. Far from it. Contributions to the *Companion* were solicited with an eye toward providing its readers with a thoroughgoing rehearsal of public choice principles. Undoubtedly, however, some topics have been overlooked and some of the relevant literature left uncited. For that we apologize. But we think that those who spend time with this volume will come away with a fuller appreciation of the power of the public choice model to illuminate the behavior of *Homo politicus*. It is our hope that students of public choice and scholars actively contributing to the field will find the *Companion* to be a valuable reference tool and will learn as much from reading as we did from writing and editing.

Many debts were accumulated in preparing this volume for publication. We are grateful to Edward Elgar for his confidence in our abilities to carry this project through to its conclusion, for the free hand given to our decisions about topical coverage and authorship, and for his patient willingness to await delivery of a manuscript acceptable to us. Once that point was at last reached, his staff supervised the production process with a high level of professional competency.

While each of the contributors to the volume deserves our thanks as well – they did most of the work, after all – a number of them merit special recognition. Lisa Anderson and Randall Holcombe came to the rescue when, at nearly the last minute, prior commitments with other contributors fell through. Mark Crain and Robert Tollison not only wrote their own chapters, but provided extremely useful comments and suggestions on several others as well.

Melissa Yeoh did yeoman's work tracking down obscure bibliographic details and corroborating classical allusions; we here thank her for her able research assistance. If not for Michael Reksulak's proofreading skills, there would have been many more errors in the final product. A timely and much appreciated summer grant from the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation afforded the senior editor the opportunity to devote his full attention to finishing the project. While we are both grateful for all the help we received along the way, the two of us accept full responsibility for any remaining

defects. We lay down our red pens, turn off our computers, and submit to the judgment of the market.

William F. Shughart II
Laura Razzolini

To Hsiao-Ting (Adeline), Claire ChinYan and Vivian TianAi – MR
To the memory of my father (1929–1991) and to my mother – LR
To Hilary, Willie and Frank – WFS

