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978-0-521-12979-4 - Party Politics, Volume III: The Stuff of Politics

Ivor Jennings

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PARTY POLITICS

VOLUME III

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PARTY POLITICS

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VOLUME III

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PREFACE

This volume completes not only *Party Politics* but also the survey of British political institutions begun with *Cabinet Government* in 1936 and continued with *Parliament* in 1938. The termination of a project formulated more than a quarter of a century ago perhaps excuses a little sentiment, and one's mind turns to the famous Epilogue of Littleton's *Tenures*, which begins: 'Ore jeo ay fait a toy, mon fils, trois livres.' The reference is apt because Littleton continues with an apology: '... I would not have thee beleeve, that all which I have said in these bookes is law, for I will not presume to take this upon me. But of those things that are not law, inquire and learne of my wise masters learned in the law.' There is high authority (Co. Litt. 395a) for following 'the grave and prudent example of our worthy author'. In relation to *Party Politics* the advice is very relevant; for the book is founded not only on the learning of 'my wise masters learned in the law', but also on that of many wise masters learned in other disciplines.

Cabinet Government was designed as a law book, and on the argument expressed in *The Law and the Constitution* it was such a book, though the argument was not widely accepted in the thirties. *Parliament* was more difficult to classify, since it was necessary to use material which could hardly be brought even within the broad definition of the *lex et consuetudo Parliamenti*. *Party Politics* could not be written unless the conventional boundaries of academic learning were ignored. It was obviously necessary to make use of the learning of historians and political philosophers. This third volume betrays my profession in several chapters; but my reliance on experts in other fields of knowledge is even more obvious than in the earlier volumes. Almost every conclusion has to be checked by reference to wise and learned masters. The technique which I have used is not, however, original. It is constantly in use by civil servants and legal advisers. Every political decision is, or at least ought to be, based upon a vast accumulation of knowledge and experience; but every adviser has to pick out what seems to him to be relevant and to emphasise what seems to him to be important. This volume uses the same technique, but I have had to

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PREFACE

learn how to omit both in reading and in writing, and it would be surprising if many of my judgments were not challenged by those more competent to judge.

Littleton ended his Epilogue with the line ‘*Lex plus laudatur quando ratione probatur*’; and Coke displayed his remarkable capacity for deflating histrionics by adding, ‘This is the fourth time that our author hath cited verses’. Perhaps it is as well, therefore, that political principles cannot be proved by reason.

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W. I. J.