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## Book Note

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# BOOK NOTE

SALIENT ISSUES OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION. Edited by John P. Wheeler, Jr. New York: National Municipal League, 1961. Pp. xix, 172. \$3.00.

Mr. John P. Wheeler, Jr., Director of the State Constitutional Studies Project of the National Municipal League, has drawn together in this short book several interesting and informative essays on the many problems growing out of the inability of state constitutions to meet the needs of the people today. The material contained in the book is limited to a discussion of only the salient issues presented by the problem of keeping big state government efficient, effective, and yet democratically responsible to the people it serves, in light of the internal structure of the constitutions which are being utilized by the states today.

The book is divided into three major parts. Included in each of these parts are articles written by men who have studied these issues at length. Part I, "The People and Their State Government," deals with issues regarding an individual's relationship to his state—his protections against and his control over governing authorities. The second part, "The Representatives of the People," concerns itself with the established structure of state government and its effect on the quality of local leadership thereunder. Part III, entitled "The Powers of the State," explores the powers which are given and those denied to the state legislatures with particular emphasis on local government, taxation, and finance. The multiple problems created by these limited powers are also discussed. In each of these articles the authors attempt to present to the reader a comparative study of the weaknesses and strong points evident in the governmental structure of the states and also to tender some ideas for improving those weaknesses.

In the conclusion John E. Bebut examines what is considered the central issue of constitutional revision. This issue is whether a state's constitution should be changed so as to provide the legal framework for a more active government or a limitation on the activities and powers of government. The author states that there are concrete signs of growing concern and desire by the people that the states, as members of the federal system in which we live, become more responsible and effective bodies in the present time. The increasing interest of the American people in the quality of their state and local governmental bodies gives Mr. Bebut hope that improvement in these instrumentalities is forthcoming.

The writers of this book recognize full well that any attempt to generalize the enormous differences presented by the population, size, geographical locale, political vitality, and economic resources of the various states was a difficult, if not impossible, task. The reader of this book may not find the conclusions reached particularly applicable to his state and its problems, but the studies, analyses, and ideas presented herein do have some bearing on the governmental problems facing all the states today. If taken as a reflection on the federal system in which we live, the book will provide interesting and enlightening information which should be read by all who are interested in improving state constitutions and the scheme of local government in which we live. This project seeks to provide a program of education to the public concerning the deficiencies and potentialities of our present state constitutions. The National Municipal League believes that through education the inherent capacity of citizens to achieve progress in this area will be manifested.