Reading Number 19

American Federalism

By Daniel Elazar

p. 122, last ¶– “Part of the states’ adaptation has been manifested in their efforts to improve their institutional capabilities to handle the new tasks they have assumed. In the twentieth century, there has been an extensive and continuing reorganization of state governments leading to increased executive responsibility, greater central budgetary control, and growing expertise of state personnel (whose numbers are also increasing)…”

p. 123, ¶ 2– “There has also been a great and continuing increase in the states’ supervision of the functions carried out in their local subdivisions. The states’ role in this respect has grown as fast as or faster than that of the federal government and is often exercised more stringently, a possibility enhanced by constitutionally unitary character of the states.”

p. 123, ¶ 4– “A fourth factor that adds to the strength and vitality of the states is the manner in which state revenues and expenditures have been expanding since the end of World War II…”

p. 123, ¶ 5– “Still a fifth factor is the continuing role of the states as primary managers of great programs and as important innovators in the governmental realm. Both management and innovation in education… continue to be primary state responsibilities in which outside aid is used to support locally initiated ideas.”

p. 124, ¶ 2– “Most of the conflicts connected with federal-state relations are of two kinds: (1) conflicts between interests that use the federal versus state argument as a means to legitimize their demands or (2) low-level conflicts over the best way to handle specific cooperative activities.”

p. 124, ¶ 4– “In the last analysis, the states remain viable entities in a federal system that has every tendency towards centralization present in all strong governments. They remain viable because they exist as civil societies with political systems of their own. They maintain that existence because the American political tradition and the Constitution embodying it give the states an important place in the overall fabric of American civil society.”

p. 125, ¶ 2– “The states remain important in a continental nation as reflectors of sectional and regional differences that are enhanced by the growing social an economic of every part of the country, even as the older cultural differences may be diminished by modern communications.”

p. 125, last ¶– “In sum, the virtue of the federal system lies in its ability to develop and maintain mechanisms vital to the perpetuation of the unique combination of governmental strength, political flexibility, and individual liberty, which has been the central concern of American politics.”