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shared.⁵ Indeed, in a full evaluation of the unanimity rule its normative properties must be considered. Wicksell's advocacy of the unanimity rule was based on its normative properties. The unanimity rule would protect individuals from being coerced by other members of the community, he argued. Wicksell used "coerced" not in the sense employed by Breton, who took it to mean having a different evaluation of the public good *at the margin* from one's tax price, but in the sense of being coerced through a collective decision to pay more for a public good than its benefits are in toto. This argument for the unanimity rule stems directly from Wicksell's view of the collective choice process as one of mutually beneficial voluntary exchange among individuals, as is Buchanan and Tullock's (1962) (see also Buchanan, 1975b). This emphasis on the "voluntary exchange" nature of collective choice underlies the classic essays by both Wicksell and Lindahl and forms an intellectual bond between them, leading in Wicksell's case to the unanimity principle, and in Lindahl's to a set of tax prices equal to each individual's marginal evaluation of the public good. It also explains the reference to "just" taxation in the titles of each of their essays. We shall return to these issues in Chapter 6.

4.3 The optimal majority

When a less than unanimous majority is sufficient to pass an issue, the possibility exists that some individuals will be made worse off via the committee's decision; Wicksell's coercion of the minority can take place. If the issue is of the public good-prisoners' dilemma variety, and there exist reformulations of the issue that could secure unanimous approval, the use of a less-than-unanimity rule can be said to impose a cost on those made worse off by the issue's passage, a cost that could be avoided through the expenditure of the additional time and effort required to redefine the issue so that its passage benefits all. This cost is the difference in utility levels actually secured and those that would have been secured under a full unanimity rule. Buchanan and Tullock were the first to discuss these costs and refer to them as the "external costs" of the decision rule (1962, pp. 63-91; see also Breton, 1974, pp. 145-8).

Were there no costs associated with the unanimity rule itself, it would obviously be the optimal rule, since it minimizes these external decision costs. But the time required to define an issue in such a way as to benefit all may be considerable. In addition to attempting to find a formulation of the proposal benefiting all, time may be required to explain the nature of the benefits of the proposal to some citizens unfamiliar with its merits. On top of these costs must be added the time lost through the strategic maneuvering that might take place as individuals jockey for more favorable positions along the contract curve, as described earlier.

Most observers, including those most favorably disposed toward the unanimity rule like Wicksell and Buchanan and Tullock, have considered these latter costs sufficiently large to warrant abandoning this rule. If all need not agree to a committee decision, what percentage should agree? The preceding considerations suggest a trade-off between the external costs of having an issue pass against which the

⁵ At least two normative proposals for sharing these gains are dependent on the bargaining or risk preferences of the individuals (Nash, 1950; Braithwaite, 1955).

