

## GOVERNMENT IN THE METROPOLIS

Charles Press

Iron River is a community in Michigan's relatively depressed Upper Peninsula. In reality, it is five different cities, villages or townships with a total population of around 10,000 huddled in one relatively compact urbanized area. The depressed economy of this iron-mining community led to suggestions that these legal units merge. In this microcosm, there erupted at this time, the same bitter arguments about consolidation which are common when one of America's great cities attempts to annex suburbanites. The smaller suburban units rang with familiar arguments about being swallowed up in a big city, the same arguments one would hear if Chicago proposed to merge with a few of its suburbs. Thus, what appears to most outsiders as one social and economic community, and certainly is so for many purposes important to its residents, is splintered among five governments for what seem logical reasons to local residents. Those logical reasons which reformers too often have regarded as irrelevant or even pathological, are at the heart of the problem of resistance to integration in small as well as large communities. Before we can talk very confidently about the future of any urban complex, we must try to understand why what seems to be a single city to outsiders is viewed so often by inhabitants as a variety of units that require legal separateness.

### I

First, let us examine the basis on which an urban complex is viewed by outsiders as a single entity for which a single government would be desirable. Most observers assume this is the case when an urban complex appears to be a single, interdependent, social and economic community. When they see it as having a center at which social and economic decisions are made that affect all parts of the complex, and in turn when they see that the reactions of the parts influence the pattern of decision making at the center, it seems to them a single community. This is the logic of John Dewey: when the indirect consequences of acts of others are recognized and it appears desirable that an attempt be made to regulate them, a public comes into existence.<sup>1</sup> Such a public requires a government so that it can shape its own destiny.

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Charles Press is Professor, Institute for Community Development, Michigan State University.

Deciding upon the limits of influence of actions taken at the center of an urban complex has its practical problems. If communication alone is used as a measure, one would include within the boundaries of the Great City the circulation area of its Sunday newspapers, the broadcast coverage for its major league ball team, or even, for the largest of America's cities, the readership area of such a journal as The New Yorker magazine. In a real sense persons in outlying areas have their lives affected significantly by such communications, and to that degree are part of the larger city and have some right to influence decisions made there. But such influence can perhaps most appropriately make itself felt through economic actions.

For logical government administration, however, the boundaries of metropolitan areas are more commonly set by transportation patterns—the trip to and from work, shopping or recreation, or daily delivery routes of department stores and other local businesses. Even setting of limits by such measures results in a fuzziness at the fringes since some commuters go far out into the countryside as do some local merchants, and a sizeable minority of residents only come occasionally to the metropolis.

Attempts to improve on the definition have sometimes emphasized natural geographic features as boundaries, population densities, and overlapping memberships of area residents. But no single definition is completely satisfactory, though John Dewey's notions seem to me to provide a good rough guide—where decisions made at different parts of an urban complex unexpectedly affect significantly the lives of residents in other parts of that complex and they recognize and wish to control that effect, the conditions for a governmental community are present.

As you are no doubt aware, the above definitions are too complex for easy use and the Census Bureau has provided a way out of the difficulty. Their definition of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area is also a rough but useful one for delimiting the boundaries of Great Cities. The SMSA includes roughly a city of 50,000 or more plus the county in which it is located, and any other counties that the Census Bureau determines to be socially and economically integrated with it. The use of county boundaries causes some problems. Thus one hundred and eighty miles of largely desert area lying between Los Angeles county and the gambling tables of Las Vegas must be defined as metropolitan. But these disadvantages are minor and are more than made up for by a definition which most social scientists agree encompasses what they would include within the boundaries of a metropolitan area and because it makes available to them a great variety of census data about the people living within these boundaries.

The 225 SMSA's vary widely in size and this makes the definition too broad for many purposes. For example, in 1960 the SMSA's varied from 51,850 in Meriden, Connecticut, to 10,694,633 in the New

York City metropolitan area; a variation of over 200 percent. And within the larger SMSA's are many cities which could be SMSA's in their own right if they were as lucky in choosing their location as Pine Bluff, Arkansas; Anderson, Indiana; or Salem, Oregon. But this fact is less important for our purpose, which is to delimit the boundaries of what might logically be considered a local government unit. Each of the SMSA's, large or small, has a center where social and economic decisions affecting the whole area in significant and unplanned ways are made, and where reactions take place which suggest the desirability of control of such decisions as well as counter-decisions that influence what occurs at the center.

## II

The above logic was once commonly applied to the government of metropolitan areas. The residents of a Great City lived within that city, even in fairly recent times. Let me illustrate with the history of Grand Rapids, Michigan. The city was incorporated in 1850 in a shape two miles-by-two miles square. Seven years later it added a half mile strip to each of the square's sides to increase the city to roughly a three miles-by-three miles square. This annexation was thus ring-like, similar to the way rings appear on a tree (if you can for the moment imagine a tree with a square trunk). Thirty-four years later, in 1891, another ringlike annexation took place, but for the first time breaks occurred along the boundary. A half mile strip was added across the top and along the west side. Another strip was added along most of the south and a little over half of the east side. But note that, even with the breaks, this 1891 annexation again was of the encircling type. After this point a change occurs. In 1916, a small strip was added to the south, and between 1924 and 1927, small bits and parcels were added in each direction. And this was the end of annexation of any consequence until 1960.

What had happened between 1891 and 1925 when, following the old pattern, one would expect another encircling annexation? One clue is that in 1924, East Grand Rapids was incorporated as a wealthy residential suburb independent of the city. It stood as a monument to the automobile. At the beginning of the age of the motor car, it was possible for the wealthy at least to move away from the fringes of the central city, incorporate a high tax base residential community, and provide a high level of urban services. The suburb had no industry, prided itself on the beauty of its homes, and has always had a first-rate school system.

What was possible for the wealthy in the nineteen-twenties became possible for the middle class by the end of the depression and for the lower middle class after World War II. Technology made it practical to leapfrog settlements to any place in the territory

surrounding a city, with the only condition limiting such settlements being that they be accessible enough by car to permit commuting. Blacktop roads became the key to urbanization. No longer was it necessary to settle on the city's fringes to receive urban services or be close enough to trolley and bus lines to commute. Other technological advances encouraged this movement: the septic tank, new well-drilling techniques, and even the power lawn mower which made the large lawns of suburbia tolerable for those not quite wealthy enough to employ a yard man.

When urban sprawl became feasible for the middle class, the pattern of government in metropolitan areas changed. Suburban incorporations increased after World War II. In many states such incorporation offered special legal advantages; in Michigan, for example, small suburbs are dramatically overrepresented on County Boards of Supervisors as compared to urbanized townships. The process of incorporation also frequently offered tax advantages if a particularly lucrative plant located in the boundaries of the new city, or, as was sometimes the case, the new city was incorporated around the particularly lucrative plant. In addition, for many of the new middle class, suburbia represented a status leap from ethnic communities and the politics of the big city.

All such factors contributed to proliferation within government and the rejection of the notion of one government to administer services for a single social and economic community. One should not conclude, however, that all suburban communities were doggedly able to resist merger with the central city. Between 1950 and 1960, three-quarters of the nation's largest central cities annexed territory and half of these had annexed more than ten percent of their 1960 population in the previous ten-year period. One out of five cities with more than 5,000 population annexed territory in 1962 alone.<sup>2</sup> The compilations in the Municipal Year Book reveal that annexations have been on the increase in recent years. We may hypothesize that economic problems may have occasionally blighted dreams of suburban independence. For some suburbanites the easiest way out has been return to the central city through annexation. But the dominant trend is still one of suburban independence. For every annexation that is successful, several more attempts fail. And seldom does an incorporated suburb merge with the central city or even with another suburb. At this point the battle lines are still drawn between suburbs and the central city.

### III

What then, encourages intergovernmental cooperation, if not integration, within metropolitan areas? It appears that such cooperation is most likely among units with similar characteristics when the

service relates to life styles. On the other hand when services have little effect on community life styles the technical and engineering problems determine patterns of cooperation.<sup>3</sup> Dye found that annexations occurred more frequently when the difference in social distance between central city and suburb was small, and less frequently when the reverse was true. Similarly Williams and his colleagues found that cooperation in respect to such value-impregnated services as schools and zoning occurred among communities of similar social-economic status. On the other hand, in respect to traffic control and transportation, sewage treatment and obtaining water supplies, the technical engineering requirements generally determined the patterns of cooperation. Thus the communities along the river were the obvious location for sewage treatment plants, and suburbs of all status levels cooperated with such communities in establishing an integrated sewage disposal system.

Cooperation is thus not shunned for its own sake. It may even occur among differing units when benefits to all are clear as in matters affecting health and safety or even in cases when substantial economies may be gained. But those mutual arrangements that loosen local control over life-style kinds of services are those viewed most suspiciously.

What, then, are the sensitive services that residents see as influencing the way they live in important ways? The most important ones seem to be zoning and housing regulations. Schools also qualify as important, though sometimes because of school locations, mergers may occur without disturbing local arrangements. Through control of these services, residents hope to protect, it appears, what they regard as distinctive ways of life. Residents of a city see it as a variety of subcultures, distinguishable in important ways. Each represents a slightly different view of the way life may be lived. Some are regarded by residents as extremely desirable ways of life, and residents of these communities are those that most jealously guard their independence. It is this notion that preserves five little units of government in Iron River and more than six hundred in the New York SMSA.

#### IV

In the past, all subcultures existed within one great city and this is still the case today within central cities and, indeed, within sections of many of the suburbs. Many of these sections have their distinctive names. Social scientists have only recently begun to devise methods for locating and identifying them. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, somewhat overwhelmed by the heterogeneity of subcultures within the legal boundaries of New York City, categorize the result as too complex "to hold still in the mind."<sup>4</sup>

It is, however, just such heterogeneity that attracts persons to a Great City. The larger the city, the greater the smorgasbord of choices available. In New York City and its metropolitan area one imagines almost every combination of characteristics might be located somewhere.

What are the characteristics upon which subcultures are generally constructed? The chief controlling factors are those that limit residence location for certain residents: income, and racial-ethnic characteristics. The first is related to such factors as social status and education. A third variable of obvious importance is composition of family. Those with children demand, if possible, types of housing that are large enough for them and neighborhoods that are safe. Those who are retired or without children may prefer apartment life.

Using these three characteristics, Shevky and Bell devised a system of social area analysis, and through the use of census reports were able to classify every part of the metropolitan area into subcultures according to their mixes of these three variables.<sup>5</sup> The economists Hoover and Vernon in their study of the New York City metropolitan area chose similar variables: job type, income level, and age composition of the household to explain residential choice.<sup>6</sup> They argued that the distinction between blue- and white-collar workers and the census types within each of these broad classes appear sometimes to differentiate more precisely than income. For Glazer and Moynihan, ethnic background of residents is a crucial variable that explains the significant subcultures of New York City.<sup>7</sup> They note how social, economic and political patterns vary among different ethnic groups; how Italians, for example, resist residential invasion by Negroes and Puerto Ricans and continue to live in greater numbers near the center of Manhattan than have other descendants of immigrant groups. They also stress the importance of religion as a differentiator, particularly with groups having parochial schools. Such ethnic groupings, they argue, have not melted into the larger society but rather have developed outlooks somewhat different both from those of natives of the country of origin and from those of white, Anglo-Saxon protestants.

Other characteristics also lead to differentiation but these are of secondary importance. A colleague and I did a study of the urbanites moving into a farming area on the fringes of Lansing, Michigan.<sup>8</sup> Most of these were blue-collar workers in the city's auto plants. But we found they had two distinctive characteristics: they wanted some small acreage to cultivate on their own, and four out of five households had a husband or wife who had been raised on a farm. As might be anticipated, these residents tended to view with disfavor the further urbanization of the township. Their specialized subculture

was a miniature imitation of a farm community. Other specialized demands are those of the Bohemian, and even those of the suburban gardener, but again these are subcultures of secondary significance.

Those characteristics that seem of major importance in forming subcultures are thus race and ethnicity (including in these the factor of religion), occupation (which is closely related to income, educational level and social status), and family size and age. On this basis most residents of a metropolitan area sort themselves out and, as the result of this sorting out process, distinctive life styles evolve.

The political importance of such subcultures lies in the distinctive viewpoints that they nourish. Each provides a distinctive set of daily experiences for its residents and these experiences help shape the political and social outlook. Take for example, the experience of living in an apartment house as described in Sally Benson's Junior Miss.<sup>9</sup> One study reports that high cost apartment residents in St. Louis were more likely than homeowners to take what one might describe as a civic viewpoint; that is, they favored governmental reforms even when such reforms cost money, and they voted to improve services even when the benefit affected them very little.<sup>10</sup> Or imagine what the experience of living in or growing up in a Negro slum in a northern city must teach in respect to politics. What kinds of political response are likely among citizens who are continually affected by patterns of discrimination? The writings of Baldwin and Ellison suggest the answer.<sup>11</sup>

I suggest that citizens are influenced by their experience in developing what I call a political ideology. It is not that experience determines the viewpoint. Man's rationality is not irrelevant. Different individuals undergoing similar experiences respond in somewhat different ways. But over a period of time subgroupings form their own peculiar viewpoints. Folk ideologies grow just as do folk songs.

Such ideologies help individuals to cope with their environment and orient themselves within it. They serve as a shorthand guide that gives them a picture of reality and suggests what should and should not be done.

The elements of such ideologies are the valuational, the cognitive, and the emotional. The most important is the valuational because the functional purpose of an ideology is to tell how life ought to be lived; that is, in Plato's terms, what is the just society. The cognitive element is the picture of reality that the ideology conveys. The emotional element is the ideology's symbolic content.

Note how a political ideology of discrimination against a minority group functions. The cognitive content argues that in reality the minority group members are inferior generally both morally and intellectually. The valuational part thus suggests patterns of avoidance as appropriate and just. Associated with this viewpoint are symbols

that will arouse emotional reactions. The weakest part of any ideology clearly is the cognitive since this can be challenged by argument or, more often, is directly challenged by experience. Once doubt creeps in with respect to the picture of reality, the other parts of the ideology are weakened much as the religious beliefs of freshman on a small college campus are shaken by biblical criticism of Jonah or another Bible story. But the breaking down of an ideology is seldom easy or common. Experience may challenge it, yet modification rather than obliteration is generally the result.

The ideologies that grow out of the experiences of distinctive subcultures provide, I am arguing, the element that has been so often overlooked when metropolitan integration has been proposed. Technology and the law have given metropolitan residents the opportunity to create subcultures with independent governmental status, and residents of metropolitan areas have responded to the invitation. The residents of Great Cities have parceled themselves out over the countryside in a variety of subcommunities, living a variety of lifestyle patterns designed to appeal to a variety of specialized tastes. Residents who have chosen the kind of existence they prefer to live and have met the requirements of membership in such subcultures are loath to risk change. And the viewpoints that are developed and reinforced in such subcultures reinforce this tendency.

## V

What, then, is the probability that metropolitan areas will become more integrated governmental units?

Some have hoped for the growth of a common metropolitan-wide viewpoint based on the common experiences of living within the metropolis. The sociologist Louis Wirth in an important essay described the city as leading to a way of life emphasizing impersonality and interdependence and resulting in a distinctive urban outlook.<sup>12</sup> I would agree with him and with others who see life of the suburban commuter as also leading to its distinctive outlook.<sup>13</sup> And I would also argue that such viewpoints have political implications. The basis of the New Deal was, I think, built on experiences of big city residents, as Lubell so well describes.<sup>14</sup> I also suspect that the more bland politics of today owe a good deal to the viewpoint and experiences of suburbanites.<sup>15</sup> But these areawide viewpoints will not, I think, lead to governmental integration in metropolitan areas. First, these viewpoints tend to divide further the large city from suburbia and thus encourage division rather than integration. Second, they seem more relevant for extra-metropolitan rather than intra-metropolitan political relations. They serve to unite metropolitans against non-metropolitans, but are less helpful in encouraging consolidation within the metropolis.

Others place their hope in a blurring of divisions that encourage subcultures. That the divisions based on ethnicity are growing less sharp is probably true. Ethnicity is losing some of its hold, even though the over-optimistic prophecies of the melting-pot have proven false. But enough differences will remain for some time to come to encourage division. The outlook for blurring class lines is equally uncertain. And it must be remembered that some persons have a stake in exacerbating subcultural divisions. The realtor has, I believe, kept the element of race primary in the sorting out of Negroes within a metropolis. In some cases primacy is given to occupation and income rather than race, and in the process at least some of the tension involved with this subculture is reduced. But residential integration is still relatively uncommon. It is fair to add that many Negroes themselves have a stake in preserving subcultural isolation for Negroes. Besides the Negro businessman, there exists the possibility that within the next generation or so a few northern cities may have Negro mayors. Also, most suburban officials, businessmen, and newspaper editors feel governmental independence is a worthy means of preserving an exclusive clientele. The likelihood that subcultural differences will diminish in the future enough to encourage widespread metropolitan integration appears unlikely.

The alternative is that some force may encourage greater governmental integration. Two such forces exist. One is the pressure of state and federal governments interested in an integrated attack on social and engineering problems of Great Cities. Particularly relevant, because they are spreading gradually to their suburban areas, are such social problems as substandard housing, conditions of poverty, crime and other forms of social disorganization. An efficient expenditure of resources requires greater cooperation and coordination among units and pressure for this will increase though consolidation is not likely to occur.

The other force is that already mentioned—that of economic circumstance. Those areas experiencing severe service and tax problems are most likely to favor mergers.

We may gain some insight from the analysis of the forming of federal states out of separate entities.<sup>16</sup> Riker argues that the element crucial in bringing about such mergers has been a threat that affected all parties. This is not to deny that mergers are more likely between subcultures with similar viewpoints, but to emphasize that a common threat is probably needed even in these cases to bring action.

That such threats will occur in the future seems likely—the need for a degree of cooperation will become obvious to all. Technology once provided a measure of independence, but the day of the septic tank and the individual well is coming to an end and the trip into town is taking longer. Integrated governmental effort in the

form of massive engineering feats of one or another layer of government are now quite common. And someday, I suspect, interdependence in respect to social problems will also become more obvious. And the solving of such problems requires the areawide integration of such sensitive services as zoning and housing. For this reason, I regard the consolidation of Great Cities as ultimately desirable, and indeed in one form or another inevitable.

The form, I suspect, will be a jerry-built one. Local governmental units will continue to exist even when they no longer make very many significant decisions. The trend is toward larger and larger units doing the significant acts. And some such units are unusual. Thus, the Detroit area has the Huron-Clinton Park authority covering six counties. Perhaps the ultimate in providing largescale services while maintaining a modicum of local independence in respect to zoning is the Lakewood plan of California, whereby local units contract for services from other larger units of government. Whatever the particular device, the trend is to bigness.

Given the realities of subcultures, I am suggesting that the Great Cities should strive for whatever forms of areawide governmental integration that seem possible. The criticisms of functional integration of separate services are valid. No doubt a multi-purpose federalism like that of Toronto or even of Dade County, Florida, is preferable to a Robert Moses type of operation that acts independently of all other municipal services and grabs off only the most lucrative financial results.

Nevertheless, my choice is for action even through only partially suitable forms of local government in preference to stalemate.

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