

University of Pennsylvania Law Review

FOUNDED 1852

Formerly
American Law Register

VOL. 105

FEBRUARY, 1957

No. 4

A Symposium on
**METROPOLITAN REGIONALISM:
DEVELOPING GOVERNMENTAL CONCEPTS**

INTRODUCTION

Jefferson B. Fordham †

In a very real sense metropolitan areas provide a new and different sort of frontier in American life. It is a frontier of the political and legal order. It presents an extraordinary challenge to our capacity for community organization, a challenge unmatched elsewhere on the domestic scene. We have a metropolitan civilization. Nearly two-thirds of our people reside in metropolitan areas. Politically, however, we have nothing to match this development. The tax upon our political inventiveness remains unsatisfied.

The reader will properly look to the thoughtful papers in this symposium for better identification of metropolitan characteristics and problems and for consideration in social and economic context of data and ideas bearing upon the granting of effective recognition to individual and group values in a metropolitan area. He will find pat answers neither for communities in general nor for a particular community. There are none.

† Dean and Professor of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School.

It is, nevertheless, reassuring to contemplate the growth of interest in metropolitanism. Numerous individuals and organizations have become tremendously concerned with various aspects of our rapid metropolitanization. Some indication of this is the fact that over two hundred persons attended the National Conference on Metropolitan Problems, which was held at East Lansing, Michigan, in early May 1956. While those in attendance were very largely public officials, business and labor leaders, planners and political scientists, the initiative for the conference was of lawyer origin and lawyers had important roles in conference leadership.¹ Those present agreed upon the establishment of a Continuing National Conference on Metropolitan Problems. As to purpose, it was stated:

"The primary function of the Conference should be to serve as a cooperating agency for groups and organizations concerned with metropolitan problems; to encourage and cooperate in such research, and to prepare and cooperate in the preparation of such publications and to hold such national, regional and other meetings as may further the objectives of the Conference. All of this should be done without duplication of effort and by the use of existing agencies, in so far as possible."²

This lively interest is being directed in various metropolitan centers to their respective situations. Metropolitan studies have been made in a number of communities³ and several major studies, notably those in New York and St. Louis, are now in progress. The driving force in these inquiries has been largely of central city origin.

The extent of suburban and exurban interest is another matter. So far as the unsystematic, fragmentary observation of this witness goes, there is little evidence in many outlying areas of any sense of metropolitan community. Much more common and conspicuous is a suburban residential community orientation and loyalty—and this in the case of central city workers as well as the one hundred per centum suburbanites.

It should be stressed, at the same time, that this very small-community outlook has its place in the total metropolitan thinking. It deserves to be taken into account from the early stages in a metropolitan study; there are important values associated with the smaller community units. Beyond that, a study group should have suburban representation from the outset. This affords voice and exposes subur-

1. 6 Municipal Law Service Letter, May 1956, p. 1.

2. *Id.* at 4. The Conference is headed by Frank C. Moore, President of the Government Affairs Foundation of New York City.

3. The Government Affairs Foundation of New York City has prepared a Digest of Metropolitan Surveys, thus far released only in draft form, which analyzes the eighty-eight major metropolitan surveys made during the past thirty years.

ban representatives to the broad metropolitan perspective—it brings the small community leaders to consideration of their problems in an area-wide setting.

There is an understandable tendency to rely on assumptions and fragmentary data about metropolitan life and proceed directly to consideration of approaches and possible solutions—notably governmental solutions. This tendency should be controlled. The more fundamental inquiry is directed to the data of human behavior in relation both to the growth of a metropolitan area, and to how people operate in such a milieu. One may suggest that what is basic in any social situation is human values—individual and social—human needs, human drives and the external physical forces with which man must contend. A metropolitan study should embrace an inquiry into these matters; it is a case of obtaining all the requisite data to ground mature understanding.

The function of a symposium of this character is not, of course, the same as that of a particular metropolitan study. It is, as I see it, a sort of high level, reflective orientation of special interest to lawyers and social scientists. This is to say neither that the papers are lacking in scholarship nor that they are definitive. They are the thoughtful work of able students who are highly qualified to deal with their particular topics. They should be extremely helpful to those who are undertaking basic studies relating to metropolitan affairs and to those with responsibilities at the action stage.

It is highly appropriate that a major symposium on metropolitan regionalism be published in a law review. This is so for two related reasons. First, lawyers are experts in structure; they are indispensable to the effective legal articulation of ideas about governmental affairs. Again, metropolitan problems demand an interdisciplinary effort. The knowledge and insights of social and behavioral scientists are essential to adequate lawyer grasp of his own role. Likewise, the lawyer has the respect for facts, the capacity for fact discrimination and the mental toughness for ruthless premise-testing to make him a needed ally from the inception of a metropolitan study.

At the risk of exceeding the jurisdictional limits of an “introducer,” a limited invasion of a topical area is here essayed.

It is a matter of considerable interest that, at the same time that people are becoming acutely aware of metropolitan problems, the home rule movement has been exceptionally strong on a wide front.⁴ At the present time, for example, there is very lively interest in municipal

4. Fordham, *Local Government in the Larger Scheme of Things*, 8 VAND. L. REV. 667, 673 (1955).

home rule in Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana and South Dakota. The desire for freedom from legislative interference (of which there is much less now than was once the case) and the desire for broad powers obviating any need of seeking enabling legislation are very understandable. Meddling and dependence are not suggestive of local autonomy.

What deserves particular notice here is that home rule thinking has been largely innocent of metropolitan perspective. This bespeaks a fresh look at home rule and state-local relations generally. The reference is to so-called constitutional home rule in the sense of a constitutional devolution of power to local government that is beyond legislative control. How can we assure a local unit in a metropolitan setting appropriate freedom of decision as to local organization, powers, functions, personnel and procedure and, at the same time, preserve the flexibility needed to achieve metropolitan cooperation? All that one can do here is tag this important question for the attention of students of metropolitan affairs. Unfortunately, plans for a home rule paper in this symposium went awry at a late hour.

One seizes the opportunity for a parting comment. It has been suggested elsewhere⁵ that we have failed in the development of a strong state legislative institution, that instead of making positive efforts for improvement in this key policy-making and power-devolution arm of government we have been given to limiting its powers and to by-passing it by direct constitutional action. The relevance of this to metropolitan interests must be apparent. The reach of metropolitan regional problems is likely to span a whole complex of local jurisdictions no one of which is alone equal to the task of achieving an area-wide approach. This bespeaks a representative body at the state level capable of constructive action in the fashioning, for example, of metropolitan governmental arrangements.

In a sense, home rule is a recognition of state legislative weakness and an effort to escape its effects.⁶ It is time, as suggested in the report of the President's Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, to strengthen state legislatures and make them more representative on a population basis.⁷ This is important in the immediate context: the weakness of the state legislative institution hampers effective action on metropolitan regional problems.

5. *Id.* at 668-70.

6. It is noteworthy that the voters of Florida, at the November 1956 general election, approved a state constitutional amendment under which Dade County, which embraces the city of Miami, may adopt a home rule charter for county responsibility for area-wide governmental functions. 45 NAT'L MUNIC. REV. 552 (1956).

7. COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR TRANSMITTAL TO THE CONGRESS 38 (1955).