

For many years those who sought to erase the image of American cities painted by Lincoln Steffens concentrated on improving the administrative aspects of the municipal institution. We have civil service to reduce spoils, we have supervised accounting and auditing procedures to assure fiscal integrity, we have required bidding and purchasing procedures to help guarantee the best use of the taxpayers' dollars.

I want to emphasize that the adaptation of most of these niceties of administration were readily transferable from business to government or from city to city. It did not prove very difficult for relatively unsophisticated technicians to transfer such new devices from one jurisdiction to another.

In contrast, the problems with which we now struggle in our urban centers are far more complex. They defy easy solution. We can readily identify that our patient is diseased, but we are not sure we know the cause, and we are not sure whether the remedy we prescribe will work in the long run. We can see that the child has swollen neck but we are not sure whether it is swollen glands resulting from a cold or the mumps.

We don't know because we have yet to devise the techniques of analysis to be able to diagnose the problem with a high degree of accuracy or to measure the results with an acceptable degree of accuracy and objectivity.

A few years ago the noted city planner, Victor Gruen, proposed a grand design for the city of Fort Worth. A vital element of that plan was the downtown pedestrian mall. I am sure that Mr. Gruen's recommendations were based upon a very careful and detailed analysis of Fort Worth. The downtown mall stirred the imagination of civic leaders all over the country. Main Streets sprouted trees, benches, entertainment, street cafes and grass areas. In some places the scheme worked. In others it was a dismal failure. If it worked in Atchison, Kans., why didn't it work in Grand Rapids, Mich? What conditions were different? What conditions were superficially different that modifications in the plan would have made it successful? Or, why should it not have been used at all?

That is only one example. There is no encyclopedia of experience for us to refer to. There isn't even an accepted research methodology to aid us in our efforts to find answers to determine whether the choice of alternatives we can select will produce the results intended.

I am firmly convinced that we must give considerably more attention to the development of more meaningful knowledge of our urban areas while we are adding to the chest of tools with which we attack the problems we can identify. The more refined the tools become, the more important it is that we are prepared to use them skillfully.

This concern is a universal one. It has been the subject of discussion in technical and policy committees of State leagues of municipalities, the National League of Cities and numerous professional municipal associations for some time. The magnitude of the tasks of exploring problems in major cities and metropolitan areas in depth, of evaluating the remedies attempted, of determining the ingredients of success or failure required much more than discussion. They require detailed statistics, analysis by sophisticated professionals, money, and institutional arrangements which do not now exist.

The intensity of the concern for the importance of attacking the "information gap" in this field can be demonstrated by the events of the last year.

In 1962 the new Under Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Robert C. Wood, presented a paper as part of Washington University's faculty seminars on foundations of urban life and form,<sup>1</sup> in which he stressed the importance of recognizing the individuality of cities and the inappropriateness of concluding that remedies for their ills could be generally applied. Dr. Wood proposed the establishment of a network of urban observatories over the country which could assemble local government information, experiences, experiments, and results. This is similar to that now proposed in the bill before you. The unique aspect of the urban observatory proposal was that each observatory would agree to maintain and organize research programs based on an agenda of priorities, research subjects identified by city and cooperating university consultants. The result of work on these priority subjects would be comparably compiled data, research methods, and results. We could gradually develop a reservoir of experience based upon sound, reliable data and multiple experiments.

<sup>1</sup> "Contributions of Political Science to Urban Form," Robert C. Wood, *Urban Life and Form*, edited by Werner Z. Herach, 1963. Faculty seminar on foundations of urban life and form sponsored by the Institute for Urban and Regional Studies, Washington University, St. Louis, 1961-62.