

take care of police and fire protection. But when issues of metropolitanwide importance arise—such as commuter transportation, water supply, or racial and economic segregation—people must turn to other channels for action. As Robert Wood has pointed out, an “embryonic coalition” of metropolitan leaders tends to emerge to tackle areawide problems. These leaders—politicians, editors, businessmen, labor leaders—operate informally and outside the regular structure of government, as they attempt to prod government into action. They lack the requirements for effective policymaking: an adequate institutional base, legal authority, direct relationships with the metropolitan constituency, and established processes for considering and resolving issues as they emerge.⁸

When important public issues can only be handled informally and outside government channels, it is time to review the system of government in metropolitan areas and to regard the shortcomings of this system as major problems in themselves. Norton Long has set the problems of metropolitan areas in this political context:

The problems of the metropolis are important, but not because of flooded cellars or frustrated motorists, nor because they seriously threaten the viability of the metropolitan economy. They are important because they are symptomatic of the erosion of the competence of local government * * *. The threat of the eroded central city and the crazy-quilt triviality of suburbia is the threat to destroy the potential of our maintaining and reconstructing meaningful political communities at the local level. What has been treated as a threat to our physical well-being is in reality a threat to our capacity to sustain an active local civic life.⁹

THE FEDERAL SYSTEM AND METROPOLITAN ISSUES

With local governments often unwilling or unable to meet metropolitan needs, the Federal and State Governments have taken on increasing responsibilities for metropolitan welfare. The State role ranges from financial aid to local governments to direct State operations in metropolitan areas, such as highway building, and State establishment of special metropolitan authorities responsible for such functions as water supply and port development. The Federal role consists mainly of financial assistance for programs administered by State or local government. The number and size of Federal-aid programs have been growing at a striking rate: there are now more than 70 Federal-aid programs that directly support urban development, as well as a number of other kinds of Federal aid available to local governments in metropolitan areas.

State and Federal programs are helping to cope with many metropolitan needs, but they also raise troublesome political and governmental issues. Federal and State participation in metropolitan affairs greatly complicates the already fragmented governmental scene. Activities of all three levels of government now function in close juxtaposition, subject to an extremely complicated web of Federal, State, and local laws and administrative regulations. In the course of supplying needed help, Federal and State programs threaten to push the confused governmental situation closer to a state

⁸ Robert C. Wood, *Metropolis Against Itself* (New York: Committee for Economic Development, 1959), p. 38.

⁹ Norton E. Long, “Citizenship or Consumership in Metropolitan Areas,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, XXXI (February 1965), pp. 4–5.