

arouse alarm unless a number of functions are chipped away successively by the creation of additional special districts. This approach is even less likely to provoke strong opposition when special districts are proposed to perform areawide functions only as a supplement to continued local performance. In addition, a metropolitan special district can usually be created by simple act of the legislature, and does not require constitutional amendment, unlike, in many cases, city-county consolidation, county home rule, or federation.

The special district approach has proved effective in providing an areawide geographic base for dealing with metropolitan problems. It can function unrestricted by the boundaries of local government jurisdictions. It offers the advantage of consolidated administration of a large-scale operation, and facilitates improved planning and execution of the services provided, at the same time that the smaller units of local government retain responsibility for other functions. The metropolitan special district is adaptable to use where the metropolitan area covers more than one county, or more than one State. Some of the other reorganization methods are practically limited to a single county and State.

Giving the limited-purpose special district just one, or at most a few, functions makes its responsibility clear. It is likely to give the public what it wants, exactly and quickly. If the public wants a good water supply, for example, it will know that by creating a water district it will get good water, or know the reason why. On the other hand, this "single mindedness" often works to the detriment of a coordinated approach, since such basic services as water supply or transportation have a major impact on other area development programs.

The limited-purpose special district has other weaknesses. Extensive use of the device complicates rather than simplifies the problem of governmental coordination in the metropolitan area. Particularly when separate districts are set up for each function, authority is further diffused rather than consolidated, increasing the difficulties of voter control and leading to duplication of effort. Once set up, special districts are difficult to abolish or consolidate, with the result that such areawide approach as there is in the metropolitan community tends to be fragmented rather than coordinated.

Limited-purpose special districts frequently are established with the intention of being self-supporting. The need for covering their costs tends to become a preoccupation, with the result that they may neglect the effects of their activities on other related services, and resist efforts to have them assume responsibility for activities such as mass transit which may not be self-supporting.

(b) Multipurpose districts

The metropolitan multipurpose district has developed mainly as a way of capitalizing on the strengths of the limited-purpose approach while avoiding the fractionalization of government in metropolitan areas. A metropolitan multipurpose district as here defined is a special authority set up pursuant to State law to perform a number of services in all or most of a metropolitan area. Usually the initiation and approval of the establishment of the district and the addition of functions requires the approval of local governing bodies or of the voters of the affected local governments.