

ization for a wide variety of approaches to metropolitan organization, supplemented by appropriate State assistance and regulation. These recommendations, as well as Commission suggestions for Federal measures to facilitate governmental adjustment, will be described in chapter VII.

THE POLITICS OF REORGANIZATION

Efforts at governmental reform must sooner or later pass the test of political acceptability. Most proposals for major reorganizations are decided by the voters directly through a popular referendum in the areas affected, often with a requirement for separate majorities in each jurisdiction. To identify the main political factors affecting reorganization efforts, the Commission studied the fate of 18 proposals that were submitted to popular referendum between 1950 and 1961.³⁸ Six of these proposals were for city-county consolidation and one involved the merger of two adjacent cities. Another four, calling for changes in county charters, exemplified the urban county approach. Another involved a four-county sales tax for financing public improvements throughout the area. Two proposals were for metropolitan special districts, and four involved adjustments between county and municipal governments. Of the 18 attempts, only 8 were successful; another (Nashville-Davidson County, Tenn.) was later adopted with some modifications. This choice of examples is not intended to imply that the reorganization plans were necessarily desirable or that progressive reformers confronted an unenlightened opposition. All the proposals embodied various compromises; all contained both advantages and disadvantages for the people who had to make a choice. Despite differences from one area and proposal to another, certain common themes emerged from a study of the 18 cases.

In almost all cases, the proponents of reorganization focused strongly on two issues: the faultiness of existing local government structure or operations, and the need for urban services in outlying areas. The issue of services most commonly involved water and sewage disposal, but fire protection, rural zoning, police protection, and traffic control were also mentioned. Financial considerations were cited as major proreorganization arguments in 10 of the 18 areas, with emphasis on both the areawide totals of local government costs and taxes and the allocation of government costs within the area.

The opposition to reorganization also concentrated heavily on a few key points. Financial arguments were used against reorganization in all but two cases, with the allocation of costs to specific areas partly involved in most instances. In two-thirds of the cases, opponents claimed that the proposal was too drastic or too sweeping. Interestingly, this charge was made against the modest county charter proposals as well as against more ambitious reorganization efforts. In about half the cases, detrimental effects of reorganization upon local government employees or elected officials were major factors cited by the opposition. In five cases, the implications of reorganization for Negroes in the central city emerged as a negative factor, in that the

³⁸ For a fuller description of this study, see *Factors Affecting Voter Reactions to Governmental Reorganization in Metropolitan Areas* (Washington: Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, May 1962).