

each generation has adapted them to cope with its own problems. Their contemporary significance is thus a cumulative result of national experience as well as of historic origin.

The most recent general review of the current status and effectiveness of the federal system was undertaken between 1953 and 1955 by the U.S. Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, better known as the Kestnbaum Commission. The conclusions in the Commission's report to the President are a useful starting point for establishing a philosophy of intergovernmental relations in metropolitan areas.¹ These conclusions have served as the basis for much of the work of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, which was established in 1959, pursuant to a recommendation of the House Committee on Government Operations,² to give continuing attention to governmental relations within the Federal framework.

The Kestnbaum Commission found that the federal system, with its division of authority between the National and State Governments, offers many clear advantages for a nation as large and diverse as the United States. It has facilitated wide participation in government, maintained local initiative, provided laboratories for research and experimentation in government, and bolstered the principle of citizen consent. In addition to the basic division between the Federal and State Governments, the States have established a further division of authority between the State, its counties, and municipalities. This division has enabled local option to prevail on a wide variety of issues and has fostered a diversity of values and policies—including many in opposition to those prevailing in Washington at any particular time.

Flexibility has been one of the main characteristics of the federal system, in the view of the Kestnbaum Commission. The system has proved workable under a variety of changing conditions as well as changing public expectations. It has had to cope with a vast increase in the population of the United States and an unparalleled diversity of ethnic and racial groups, the industrialization of the economy, revolutions in transportation and communication, the emergence of the United States as a world power, and the changing values that have assigned to government a major role in promoting social and economic welfare. These developments have led to modifications in the system, and there has been a vast enlargement of Federal Government activity and authority. Nevertheless, the continued vitality of State and local government is evidence that the principle of strong, independent levels of government has been maintained throughout this process of adaptation.

The growth of metropolitan areas poses a current challenge not only to the local governments in these areas but to the entire federal system and its capacity to govern effectively. There has been special concern that local governments are bypassing the States and turning directly to Washington for help with urban problems, and that both the States and the localities may be unable to cope with the forces un-

¹ Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Final Report of the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Pursuant to Public Law 109, 83d Cong.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955). The following discussion summarizes material presented in the introduction and first 2 chapters of this report.

² U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations, *Federal-State-Local Relations: Federal Grants-in-Aid*, 85th Cong., 2d sess., H. Rept. No. 2533, p. 51.