

city limits, but the city's power to cope with a situation ends abruptly at its boundary lines. In addition to local inability to provide many services, individual communities may damage their neighbors' interests by their own policies—by excluding moderate-cost housing or polluting rivers, for example.

The complexity of metropolitan problems and the inability of many smaller units to cope with them defeats the theory of local home rule and popular control, as well as the ability of local government to provide services. Where everybody is concerned but no one unit has the power to act, what purpose is served by local popular control? The Commission shares the view expressed by Luther Gulick that municipal home rule in the mid-20th century is not the right to be left alone behind legally defined bulwark, but rather the right to participate as an equal partner in arriving at decisions which affect community life. This concept was stated more fully by Hugh Pomeroy:

Local governmental autonomy can have justification—and, ultimately, validity—only as it is accompanied by responsibility, a realization by the individual municipality, government, and people, of being an integral part of an intercommunity composite, with an acceptance of obligations based on that relationship. And the primary obligation is that of acceptance of some limitation of freedom of action in the interest of the greater good.⁹

Home rule, in the view of the Commission, is by no means an absolute principle of local government today, but must be modified within a metropolitan context.

FRAGMENTATION VIA THE SPECIAL DISTRICT

Special districts responsible for schools, utility services, or other functions are a prominent feature of the governmental landscape in metropolitan areas, accounting for more than 60 percent of the local units in these areas in 1962. These districts play an important role in metropolitan government, as their prevalence suggests. Generally they are created to provide a specific service when existing units of general government (cities, towns, counties) are either not providing it or not doing so in an acceptable way. An additional factor of some importance is that special districts represent a way of avoiding State restrictions concerning debt limitations or other restraints on units of general government.

The creation of a special district is a relatively easy and direct way of satisfying a particular service need. The public appears to be satisfied with the services they receive from these districts, and most are meeting the needs that led to their creation. Despite this positive performance, however, special districts frequently give rise to intergovernmental problems and hamper the effective coordination of local government services as a whole.

Special districts that are responsible for a single service or function never have occasion to weigh a variety of service needs against available resources. Each tends to set standards independently and to advance its own claims to tax dollars. Further, the splitting of urban responsibilities into separate governments often leads to

⁹ Hugh Pomeroy, "Local Responsibility" (an address before the National Conference on Metropolitan Problems, East Lansing, Mich., Apr. 29, 1956).