

poorly coordinated efforts. Thus the water district, park district, and transit authority may operate at cross purposes when they choose locations for new facilities. The operations of many independent districts not only distort the political processes through which competing demands for local revenue are evaluated and assigned priorities, but also tend to obstruct the coordination and planning of services.

In addition, the multiplicity of special districts often prevents the citizen from knowing exactly what is going on in his community. Conscientious voters must keep track of a bewildering array of special government activities, and it is difficult to hold elected officials responsible for the overall outcome. The Commission has also found that special districts frequently increase the cost of governmental services by duplicating administrative burdens and paying high interest rates on revenue bonds for capital construction.

The Commission considers the use of special districts entirely justified when units of general government do not or cannot respond to service needs of the people. The special district solution, however, may bring more problems than it solves. The Commission has taken the position that more effective control over special districts is needed, that efforts should be made to consolidate existing special districts, and that new ones should be permitted only when it is clear that no unit of general government (and no existing special district) can provide the needed service.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

Patterns of social and economic segregation have created some of the most urgent and deep-seated problems of intergovernmental relations in metropolitan areas. Social and economic disparities between different localities result in part from the structure of government: because most metropolitan areas are divided into many small jurisdictions, social differences from one location to another tend to produce local government units with distinctly different populations. Further, many local governments pursue policies that tend to exaggerate social and economic disparities by discouraging the construction of homes for low- and moderate-income families.

This interaction of socioeconomic and jurisdictional patterns has additional significance for intergovernmental relations in that it tends to produce major fiscal and public service disparities from one locality to another. Social and economic segregation fosters the development of "rich" and "pauper" communities. Residents of the poorer communities must either assume a disproportionately heavy taxload or accept a decidedly lower level of public services.

Three commonly accepted goals are relevant for evaluating the significance of these disparities: equality of opportunity, freedom of choice, and intergovernmental amity.

When disadvantaged and dependent people are isolated from the rest of society, their opportunity to acquire the capacity for a productive life is not only unequal but often denied. When the causes of their poverty or dependency are irrelevant to the general economic prosperity, as in the case of the elderly, the undereducated, or the occupationally obsolete, the climate of opportunity that will ultimately en-