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THE STATES AND THE URBAN CRISIS. Edited by Alan K. Campbell.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1970. vi + 215 pages. \$5.95.

ROGER L. GOLDMAN**

Can the cities survive? This is the question one asks as he reads *THE STATES AND THE URBAN CRISIS*; this reader, at least, would answer in the negative. The eight essayists—academicians and administrators—scrutinize fiscal, constitutional, organizational, and political actions of the various states and, regardless of the governmental activity examined, report disastrous results. The book was prepared as a background study for the Thirty-sixth American Assembly which concluded its meeting on the following note: "America is in the midst of an urban crisis demonstrating the inadequacy and incompetence of basic public policies, programs and institutions and presenting a crisis of confidence."¹ As I read the various essays, I fear that the problem is not one of incompetence, but rather a lack of desire on the part of governmental officials, in their representative capacity and as individuals, for the cities to survive.

The tone of the book is a somber one; if anything, the authors are guilty of understating the severity of the problems facing the cities. Yet, the careful avoidance of rhetoric makes even more convincing the conclusions they reach. Frank P. Grad, discussing the political difficulty of modernizing state constitutions, observes that present constitutional limitations on the whole "appear to reflect what the legislators in the state capitols and the people in the suburbs actually want."² On the question of how to achieve metropolitan government, Daniel R. Grant suggests that democratic methods should perhaps be abandoned: "Canadian and British experience in reorganizing metropolitan area government without resorting to local referenda might seem very un-American to us, but realism requires the admission that this may be the only effective means."³ Summarizing these realistic appraisals on the chances of meaningful action by the states, the editor, Alan K. Campbell, writes in the concluding essay, *Breakthrough or Stalemate? State Politics*:

If change is to come through political action, the evidence does not suggest that the forces pushing for such action are strong

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1. P. iii.
2. P. 58.
3. P. 82.

enough to accomplish it. Perhaps a stalemate has been reached in American politics; perhaps the democratic system is simply not able to respond to a situation in which there is a majority unwilling to take those actions which a minority insists are necessary.⁴

Despite the inadequacy and incompetency of past action by the states in relation to the urban crisis, the book concludes with a challenge to the states.

There are 50 states. Certainly one, two, or three of them might begin moving in these new directions. One of the advantages always claimed for the American federal system is that the states provide laboratories for experimentation. There have been brief periods in history when some states, most notably Wisconsin and New York, have played that role. Perhaps now is another time for the employment of that kind of state power.⁵

There is little reason to believe that the states will have the political will to better their performance. As A. James Reichley convincingly shows in his essay, *The Political Containment of the Cities*,⁶ the reapportionment of state legislatures in the sixties did not give control to the cities. In 1960, only two states had a majority of the population living in cities; by 1985, it is projected that suburbanites will outnumber city dwellers two to one. Reichley's predictions are supported from preliminary figures of the 1970 census. In St. Louis, for example, a 19% reduction in population will result in the loss of seven members in the Missouri House and two members in the Missouri Senate, while St. Louis County will pick up these losses.⁷

The executive branch of the federal government appears willing to give the states the opportunity to meet Professor Campbell's challenge. Of great significance for the cities is the "Oklahoma Plan" which would give the states administration over the programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity.⁸ In the past session of Congress, similar proposals in both Houses were unsuccessful. Local officials and representatives of the poor oppose these efforts as attempts to destroy the Community Action Program. Certainly the first casualty will be the Legal Services Program, as few governors could approve funding of a program which effectively challenges in court policies set by the governors themselves.⁹

For those of us concerned with the survival of the cities, it is critical that the federal government be educated on the necessity of meaningful citizen participation at the local level. Six years after "maximum feasible participation" was mandated by Congress in the Economic Opportunity

4. P. 202.

5. P. 209.

6. Pp. 169-96.

7. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 22, 1970, at 3, col. 7.

8. 5 N.L.A.D.A. 2 (May 1970) (Legal Aid Digest).

9. CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 51 (1970).

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Act,¹⁰ there are few persons close to the actual administration of effective OEO programs who question the wisdom of the concept. Even the most outspoken critic of citizen participation, Daniel P. Moynihan, admits that few mayors chose to take control of the Community Action Agencies when permitted to do so by the Green Amendment of 1967.¹¹ In 1966, Congress again recognized the necessity of "widespread citizen participation" in the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act.¹² At present, HUD officials interpret that phrase restrictively: "The Model Cities Program is not to be controlled by citizen groups. Control and responsibility rests with local government. Unfortunately, this administration inherited a philosophy in many areas in the country dedicated toward extensive citizen control."¹³

It is difficult to understand HUD's concern on how local communities resolve power relationships, so long as the community has an effective program. Citizen participation, if it takes the form of control of the program, is to be preferred over citizen apathy, which results in arbitrary assignment of control to the local government. Where the mayor and the citizens of the model cities area are in agreement, control is not a problem; where the mayor is hostile to or unaware of the needs of the citizens, a struggle for control is inevitable and often results in the grudging admiration of the mayor for the citizens, and vice-versa. Cooperation is an impossible goal when HUD decrees at the outset that the mayor shall control, for the goal of citizen involvement is defeated, as the residents have no incentive to believe Model Cities is any different from preceding governmental programs.

Without funds to solve the urban crisis, citizen participation is a meaningless gesture. Unfortunately, the categorical grant which earmarks the use of funds for specific purposes is now in disfavor, giving way to the elusive concept of flexibility inherent in the revenue-sharing plans. Although not necessarily meaning the abolition of federal "strings,"¹⁴ the net effect would be the abdication of federal controls in favor of control by state and local government. Political realities make it inevitable that the recipients of the federal monies will be the people, programs, and agencies close to the governors and mayors. This has been the history of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965¹⁵ (an Act with a mandatory pass-through provision from the states to localities with concentrations

10. 42 U.S.C. § 2782 (a) (3) (1964).

11. D. MOYNIHAN, *MAXIMUM FEASIBLE MISUNDERSTANDING* 159 (1969).

12. 42 U.S.C. § 3303(a)(2) (Supp. II, 1965-66).

13. P. 121 (John N. Kolesar, in his essay *The States and Urban Planning and Development*, quoting Robert Baida, Deputy Assistant Secretary of HUD for Model Cities and Governmental Relations).

14. Pp. 163-64.

15. 20 U.S.C. § 41 (a) (Supp. I, 1965).

of educationally deprived children). Without effective control by parents of the intended beneficiaries or by federal guidelines narrowly defining authorized expenditures, local boards of education have predictably utilized the funds to benefit all school-age children rather than just those for whom Congress wrote Title I.

The weakening of citizen participation and strengthening of revenue-sharing reflect a belief that residents of our inner cities are incapable of making constructive decisions on matters which affect their lives. One would think that the dismal failure of state and urban institutions to aid the poor would suggest that meaningful citizen participation might be a way to rejuvenate the cities. Traditionally, democracies have stressed the importance of the individual citizen having the power to control his life rather than having the government make those decisions. A return to first principles might well make the difference in whether the cities of this country once again flourish or become wastelands.