

Toronto Gets Together

[U.S. REPRESENTATIVE HENRY S. REUSS]

There are many concepts for how to solve urban problems, and one given a lot of attention has been centralization of metropolitan governments. One of the prime examples of this approach in North America has been in Toronto, an experience which has drawn both praise and criticism from local people and much attention from city-watchers all over the continent. One of those who has had high praise for the effort is a man from across the border, Representative Reuss (Democrat from Wisconsin), who recently visited Toronto to study its solution to metropolitan problems. The following is a report he wrote for the Milwaukee Journal and is published here as an interesting point of view.

Toronto a generation ago was a staid and standpat city of 600,000 people, mostly Scotch by origin. Sundays, the ladies with their white gloves road home from church on the streetcar to a dinner of beef and Yorkshire pudding.

By the early 1950's, according to a recent study of the Committee for Economic Development, Toronto "exhibited most of the now-all-too-familiar urban problems facing North American metropolitan areas today. These include: (a) an inability to plan regionally because of governmental fragmentation; (b) the inadequacy of water and sewerage facilities for a burgeoning population; (c) the inability to develop modern coordinated transportation systems; (d) the inability of individual jurisdictions to finance reasonably major projects and programs; and (e) problems dealing with all aspects of the urban environment from the provision of education to the prevention of pollution."

Today metropolitan Toronto's population has more than trebled, to 2 million. To the ethnic mix have been added some 600,000 newcomers from Italy, plus vast numbers from the British Isles, Germany, Poland, Jamaica, India, China, Hungary, Yugoslavia. The influx has improved both the cooking and the morale.

Toronto today is a model of a dynamic metropolitan two-tier government, of how to build and manage good housing for all, how to make city transportation a pleasure, and how to get the police to trust the people and vice versa.

New governmental structures are largely responsible for the progress. By 1953, metropolitan Toronto had thirteen separate municipalities — the central city and numerous towns and villages, all growing fast and haphazardly. Water supply, sewage disposal, transportation, schools, and parks were suffering from fragmentation of re-

sponsibility and lack of leadership. The individual communities were finding it increasingly difficult to tax and to borrow.

To this crisis the provincial (state) government of Ontario responded by the law of 1953 to "federate" the thirteen communities into metropolitan Toronto. By a second law in 1966, the thirteen were consolidated into six — the central city of Toronto and five grouped suburbs.

Each of the six municipalities maintains its autonomous local government. Metropolitan Toronto, on the other hand, is governed by a 33-member Metropolitan Council, directly elected on a one-person-one-vote basis. The Council elects its own Chairman as chief executive.

This is how the two-tier government works: Metropolitan Toronto assumes responsibility for "wholesale" regional matters, the six municipalities for "retail," deal-direct-with-the-people matters.

Responsibilities of metropolitan Toronto include regional parks, regional libraries, expressways, major highways, area-wide traffic control, public transit, wholesale water supply, trunk sewers and disposal plants, garbage and solid waste disposal, financing schools, hospitals, and central planning.

Responsibilities of the six municipalities are neighborhood playgrounds, neighborhood libraries, local streets, local water distribution and local connecting sewers, waste collection, operating schools, health clinics, and local planning.

The water and sewage problem has been substantially solved. Big Toronto grumbled at the beginning when it had to put its expensive but obsolescent waterworks and sewage disposal plant into the metro-government without any payment. But the grumbling ended when metro, with its great resources, soon built new regional water and sewerage plants. Toronto is now well on its way to ending water pollution entirely.

In transportation, metropolitan Toronto is also well out in front. Its excellent transportation system includes expressways and highways which bless motorists with completely centralized automatic traffic control. A sensor tells the computer how many cars are where, so that a green light may show where it will most expedite traffic.

For the mass transit rider — a million a day — there is a beautiful new subway, with a thirty-cent fare. In Milwaukee terms, it goes from Milwaukee's lakefront to the zoo, and from the Ozaukee County line to the Racine County line.

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