

Reapportionment and state constitutional reform thus present an uncertain picture. But clearly on the negative side is the lack of any great progress among the states in moving aggressively to regulate and provide funds in the major urban affairs areas that are now handled by the direct federal-local programs. Total state tax collections increased twelve and one-half per cent for the fiscal year ending in 1966 and were double the 1959 figure. Yet only a few states—large, populous ones—share in the non-federal portion of selected urban development programs.

Likewise, states are dragging their feet in taking strong fiscal and other action to overcome the growing economic and fiscal disparities between central cities and suburbs in metropolitan areas. Massive amounts of money must move from relatively affluent suburbs to help mount a real attack on the problems of central city ghettos and rural pockets of poverty. This transferring function can be performed by the federal government or the state. If it is left to the federal government, the states will have lost a really viable role in the federal system. In the final analysis, whichever level

exercises financial control over the problem of our deteriorating cities will have de facto control over much of domestic government.

CONCLUSION

The states have ample potential to play a triple-threat role in urban affairs: as “unshacklers” of local governments; as leaders in encouraging and pointing the way to new forms of urban government and intergovernmental cooperation; and as coordinators and direct providers of funds with emphasis on mitigating economic and social disparities among local units in metropolitan areas. If the states are to retain their claim as positive partners in the federal system, they must fulfill this triple-threat potential.

Their record thus far is mixed, as we have seen. Some signs indicate positive commitment; others underline continuing passivity. But the urban challenge has not disappeared; the intergovernmental administrative crisis has not been overcome; and the pace of change in our federal system has not slowed down. The time for aggressive state action is NOW!