Chapter 3

A Comparison of City and Suburban Government

In recent years, it has been fashionable to decry the growth of independent suburbs as a hodgepodge of disconnected, confusing, inefficient political entities. Suburban residents, however, have demonstrated by their votes on Metro government and in professional polls, that they are extremely reluctant to relinquish the local government that is closest to them. Suburbanites tend to believe that smaller is better.

Not every urban analyst has been critical of suburbanization. Lewis Mumford, perhaps the most influential American writer on urban culture, made this observation in 1961 in his landmark book, *The City in History*:

> The suburban town ... with a limited constituency, a homogeneity, a type of civic attitude, and an amount of leisure time ... put small town democracy into practice for more people ... than has been possible for a hundred years (quoting Robert Wood) ... Thus, though the motive for the suburban exodus was largely an escapist one ... not the least of its gains was political. Politically, the suburb might be described as an attempt to reduce the functional urban community to a size small enough for an individual to cope with.

Mumford further observed:

> ... every city, every organ of the community, indeed every association and organization, has a limit of physical growth ...
>
> The first step toward handling this situation ... is to re-group in units that can be effectively handled. Until we understand the function of the smaller units ... and can bring them under discipline, we cannot ... deploy (the urban masses) as a whole over the larger area.

Government in Cleveland Suburbs

Let us, then, examine how suburbs have functioned in Greater Cleveland, and let us compare them to governmental operations in the City of Cleveland. The suburbs to be examined are those immediately contiguous to the City of Cleveland. Those include the suburbs that, at one time or another, faced the issue of annexation

by the City of Cleveland and opted for independence. Many have social and economic characteristics similar to portions of the City of Cleveland. For example, the suburb of Brooklyn has a population similar to that of Cleveland's Wards 2, 7, and 9. East Cleveland's population compares in many respects to that of the four Cleveland wards called Glenville. Euclid's population bears similarities to much of Cleveland Wards 23 and 32. And Garfield Heights has a population comparable to Cleveland Wards 14 and 15. Table III is a chart showing the populations, tax bases, public revenues, and expenditures of those suburbs as well as for the City of Cleveland.

The comparison reveals five important facts. First, suburban governments, even where tax bases are similar to each other, have demonstrated widely *different expenditure priorities.*

Second, suburban governments have *responded with greater speed and effectiveness* to social change and economic deterioration than has the City of Cleveland.

Third, *political stability* and *community unity* are predominant factors in suburban politics. Mayors of suburban communities have substantial longevity, and suburban councils show an orderly change of personnel without usually producing a sharp change in a single election.

Fourth, some suburbs with lower tax bases than the City of Cleveland are providing *higher levels of basic service* to their residents. (See Tables III, IV, and V.)

Fifth, ethnicity, i.e., the religious and cultural traditions of individuals from common national or racial backgrounds, is more important to stability, unity and municipal priorities than personal income levels; and *shared geographic interest tends to overcome ethnic differences.*

Expenditure Priorities.   Although a city's problems seem obvious to outsiders, there is no such thing as a single right answer to city problems. Nor is there a single, proper set of priorities. There are legitimate differences on priorities and honest, fair-minded people often have widely divergent views about the allocation of municipal government expenditures. This can be seen if one examines the differences in how suburbs of similar tax bases raised and allocated money during 1976, as can be examined in Table III.

TABLE III
Comparison of Population, Local Taxation, Income, Expenses, for Cleveland and Some Adjacent Municipalities for the Year 1976*

| City | 1970 Population | Per Capita Real Estate Valuation | Levy (Mills) | Local Tax Receipts | Government Aid | Per Capita Expenses | | | | | | | |
						All Safety	Police	Legis-lation	Parks	Recrea-tion	Waste Col-lection	Debt Service
Cleveland	750,900	$4,163.44	15.2	$121,588,790	$54,715,810	$101.39	$50.38	$1.40	$2.36	$2.84	$9.24	$23.89
Parma	100,216	4,282.47	6.0	8,540,310	679,125	40.97	17.72	1.17	5.00	6.01	11.54	5.03
Euclid	71,552	5,267.00	17.0	13,141,407	1,844,956	71.76	29.83	1.22	4.98	13.21	56.46	16.77
Cleveland Heights	60,767	3,150.37	15.2	7,051,108	1,021,010	57.42	27.26	.50	3.29	11.45	33.23	23.95
East Cleveland	39,600	2,360.02	14.5	3,978,857	1,062,767	64.35	29.11	.52	2.76	.73	37.33	1.80
Garfield Heights	41,417	3,040.84	9.9	3,473,850	227,425	45.31	18.18	3.09	.11	1.66	16.51	10.14
Brooklyn	13,142	11,949.89	6.7	2,520,262	226,190	100.68	42.28	2.30	5.63	7.44	61.95	.74
Shaker Heights	36,300	4,787.91	15.0	6,811,880	428,437	115.28	46.41	.70	4.55	2.92	31.86	7.70
Lakewood	70,173	2,859.71	17.1	8,213,420	1,320,120	48.58	19.29	.66	8.76	.36	32.39	25.48

*Based upon *Financial Report for Ohio Cities, Auditor of State, 1976.*

In 1976, Cleveland Heights, Garfield Heights, and Lakewood, for example, each had similar tax bases and each had been in existence for a comparable length of time. The per capita real estate tax valuation in 1976 in Cleveland Heights was $3,150; in Garfield Heights, $3,041; and in Lakewood, $2,860. (These compared, incidentally, to a per capita real estate value of $4,163 in the City of Cleveland.) The real estate tax levy in Lakewood for municipal government was 17.1 mills, in Cleveland Heights 15.2 mills, and in Garfield Heights 9.9 mills. Obviously, citizens in Garfield Heights placed a much higher priority on low taxes than did those in Lakewood or Cleveland Heights.

Per capita expenditures for certain services also differ noticeably from suburb to suburb. In 1976, Cleveland Heights spent $60.49 per person for direct police protection and waste collection. Lakewood spent $51.68 per person for such services while having almost identical per capita receipts from local taxes as Cleveland Heights – $136.12 in local taxes per person in Lakewood and $139.61 per person in Cleveland Heights.

The greatest contrasts in expenditure policies are between suburbs with large populations of central or eastern European heritage and suburbs with large black populations. In 1976, white ethnic Parma, with a per capita real estate valuation of $4,282, levied only 6.0 mills on real estate for municipal services and levied total taxes of only $97.88 per person, while predominantly black East Cleveland, with a lower per capita real estate valuation of $2,360 and a lower per capita personal income, raised $127.52 per person from all local tax services and levied 14.5 mills on real estate.

Among the 550,000 residents of the City of Cleveland who live in different neighborhoods and have different backgrounds, differences of opinion also exist on how high taxes should be or on how public funds should be spent. These differences often have geographic identities. Thus, councilmanic attitudes and electoral returns confirm that there is a predominant sentiment in the white ethnic Wards 14 and 15 on taxation and public spending which differs from that in black Wards 17 and 18. Those four wards also perceive spending priorities differently from the heavily Irish far West Side Wards 4 and 33.

The differences stem from the people and from the patterns of land ownership. Little Warsaw, the area of Wards 14 and 15 along

Fleet Avenue, has been home for Clevelanders of Polish and other central European backgrounds for nearly 100 years. Saint Stanislaus Church is a center of culture. Imposing public halls for Polish men and women are part of the neighborhood. Many merchants either live or attend church in the community. Home ownership is at a high level. Many of the men work together in the nearby mills and belong to the same union. And parochial school tuition is a self-imposed burden that many families gladly accept. Little Warsaw is well-kept almost without exception. Along Fleet Avenue, many of the old buildings are being refurbished and some new construction is apparent. The city owns the streets and little else.

Cleveland's Hough area, comprising parts but not all of Wards 17 and 18, stands in stark contrast to Little Warsaw. Land ownership is spread among three groups – the residents, absentee landlords, and the city or other public agencies. Vast areas are simply expanses of vacant lots. The open spaces increase almost daily as apartment houses and other buildings owned by non-residents become abandoned.

Since 1972, the city, through acquiring more and more tax delinquent land in Hough, has had no apparent strategy either to rebuild the area or to care for the area in a way to protect the property values of those who are owner occupants. The residents of Hough are 99 percent black. The incidence of single parent families on welfare is high. No religious or cultural institution is a center of life for the community.

Four private groups – the Famicos, the Hough Area Development Corporation, HOPE, Inc., and Neighbors Organized for Action in Housing (NOAH) – have been engaged in efforts to build or rehabilitate housing, but their efforts have not significantly affected the behavior either of private landowners, the city, or tenants in private housing. With the incidence of home ownership low and residents highly dependent on public assistance, the Hough area is a consistent supporter of tax levies and councilmen who will vote for higher levels of public expenditures.

Those differences of people and problems make it inevitable that Hough (Wards 17 and 18) and Little Warsaw (Wards 14 and 15) are in constant disagreement over what the priorities of government should be. Even if each community received equal amounts of money, expenditure priorities would be different. Compromise between Hough and Little Warsaw on expenditure decisions is

extremely difficult, not because Hough residents are black and Little Warsaw's residents are white, but because each area has very different needs and an expenditure in one area has very little demonstrable benefit for the other area.

In the suburbs, residents with common priorities on taxation and municipal expenditures and of similar cultural heritage have tended to live together in separate suburbs. Consequently, in suburbia, the necessity for political compromises among neighborhoods having divergent priorities has been less intense than in the central city. Conflict and acrimony have been the trademarks of central city government, while cooperation has tended to be a prevailing value in suburban government.

Governmental Stability. Suburban governments reflect the philosophy that it is more important for similarly minded people to unite around common governmental priorities than it is to seek compromises among people with differing priorities. In Greater Cleveland, that philosophy arose, in part, because the suburbs initially attracted residents of like backgrounds – Slovenians moved to Euclid and farther; Italians to areas around Mayfield Road; WASPS and Jews to the areas from South Euclid to Warrensville Heights; Central Europeans to the Southside; and the Irish everywhere. Initially, a sense of pioneering and common heritage contributed to a suburban community spirit which encouraged suburbanites to tax themselves in order to create new schools, recreation facilities, libraries, and public services. As differing ethnic or racial groups have moved into these suburbs, those new groups have been assimilated into the political structure so that shared interests based on residency have generally prevailed over differences in cultural heritage.

The social unity of the suburbs has produced political stability to a remarkable degree. In most, mayors serve a decade or more. In Parma Heights, with a Democratic majority, Republican Paul Cassidy has been in office for more than twenty years. John Coyne in Brooklyn has served thirty years. And in Warrensville Heights, great racial change in the last decade has not prevented Raymond Grabow from serving fifteen years.

When suburban mayors leave office, it is usually because they are tired or because they have not done a good job repairing the streets, picking up the trash, and catching the dogs. Political defeats of incumbents occur relatively infrequently.

Moreover, the mayors themselves adopt long-term commitments to their job. A suburban mayor never leaves office to become governor or senator or a federal cabinet officer. Seldom does a suburban mayor use his position even to seek county office.

Neighborhood organizations exist in many suburbs, but their posture toward their city government is different from that of inner city groups such as the Near West Side Neighbors in Action. If a few hundred people gather for an event sponsored by a suburban neighborhood association, their purpose is not to draw up fifty demands upon city government. Suburban neighborhood associations do not have a continuing agenda of confrontation with suburban government.

Suburban neighborhood associations sponsor social events to build a sense of community. They call public meetings to permit public officials to explain city needs and programs. When the suburban neighborhood association confronts city government, the confrontation often occurs with association officers privately discussing the problem with the mayor and other city officials around a conference table at city hall. Rarely does the discussion fail to produce a result acceptable to the residents.

Most importantly, when the mayor needs a tax increase in suburbia, he turns primarily for help to leaders of those suburban neighborhood organizations rather than to nonresident business owners. In the last analysis, suburban neighborhood leaders and elected suburban officials have a strong tradition of mutual support.

Adjustment to Demographic Change. The greatest test of the suburbs, however, has been their ability to accommodate the new groups of blacks, elderly poor, and welfare families that have resided in their communities in recent years. Suburban governments have been strikingly more attentive to the needs of these groups than has the City of Cleveland to comparable populations in its wards bordering those suburbs. For example, in Brooklyn, directly adjacent to Cleveland's Ward 2, the elderly can get their driveways shoveled and lawns cut by the city service department if they are unable to do it themselves. At the same time, Brooklyn spent $220.62 per capita for municipal government in 1976, while Cleveland spent $234.92 for each of its residents.

When the Moreland Elementary School District of Shaker Heights became largely black, the Shaker Heights School Board,

without federal litigation, turned Moreland School into a magnet elementary school and instituted a successful program of voluntary busing of both blacks and whites. A similar program to prevent racial segregation is underway in the suburb of Euclid.

A Cleveland *Plain Dealer* article in the spring of 1979 remarked with glowing commendation on how the East Cleveland School Board responded quickly to growing violence and restored peace and learning to largely black Shaw High School while nearby high schools in the City of Cleveland were still dominated by fear of young toughs.

Since 1960, East Cleveland has gone from a largely white middle income community to a predominantly black community with numerous welfare families. East Cleveland, unlike Cleveland, rapidly became sensitive to the need to integrate its city hall staff, to provide help to the poor, and to protect against deterioration. Through its period of change, East Cleveland has elected both black and white public officials, including a white municipal judge who has served for approximately a decade.

In all of the older suburbs which border the City of Cleveland, response to change has been much quicker than in Cleveland, and differences of opinion have not immobilized municipal government. Distrust, accusations, and fears of corruption have never been allowed to override the essential task of municipal government – to deliver the basic services of police and fire protection, refuse collection, street repair, snow removal, and protection of real estate.

Meeting Basic Needs. Suburbs seem to place a higher priority on providing basic services than does the City of Cleveland. A comparison of expenditures between Cleveland and eight adjacent suburbs reveals that Cleveland spends the lowest percentage of its municipal income for basic services. Cleveland in 1976 spent 25 percent of its total income for police protection and waste collection, while Brooklyn, East Cleveland, Euclid, and Cleveland Heights all spent over 40 percent. Only Parma spent less than 34 percent. That financial analysis also confirms the prevailing public impression that basic services are better in the suburbs than in Cleveland (see Table V).

Ethnicity and Urban Politics. In the great wave of European immigration from 1875 to 1925, America was viewed as a melting pot in which old world immigrant traits were supplanted by a new

American language, dress, and habits. A similar image prevailed for blacks until the urban upheavals of the 1960s.

In truth, there was a melting of dress and other outward styles, but there remained in the children and grandchildren of each national group deeply felt identification with the cultural and religious traditions of their immigrant or enslaved forebearers. For more than fifty years now, those feelings of ethnic identity have been predominant factors in urban politics. Today, no candidate for public office – be it inner city, suburban, or county – can accurately assess the possibilities of success without measuring his or her ethnic base and developing a strategy to bridge ethnic gaps. The contemporary struggles for recognition of historic ethnic minorities within countries all over the world suggest that ethnicity is not unique to this country and is a permanent feature of American politics.

It is, perhaps, the comparison between how ethnicity is accommodated in the suburbs and in the central city that best explains the relative success of suburban governments. In Garfield Heights, for example, persons of black, Italian, and Polish heritage share political power and often live in neighborhoods with distinct ethnic identities; but no neighborhood is so far from any other that residents do not perceive their common dependence on parks, schools, playgrounds, and public facilities. That perception of common interest and close personal acquaintanceships enables leaders, even when ugly incidents arise, to overcome ethnic differences and distrust.

Similar recognitions exist among WASPS, Jews, and blacks in Shaker Heights, among Jews and Italians in South Euclid, among blacks and Hungarians in Warrensville Heights, among Slovenians and Irish in Euclid, among Irish, Poles, Ukrainians, and Germans in Parma Heights, and among Poles and Irish in North Olmsted.

This same pattern of ethnic cooperation is apparent in the neighborhood coalitions of Cleveland. Most of these have been formed to solve neighborhood problems. Near West Side Neighbors in Action brings together Puerto Ricans, Italians, Poles, Irish and Appalachians. In the Buckeye-Woodland Community Congress – a group encompassing parts of three Cleveland wards – blacks, Hungarians, and Italians have worked in a united fashion since 1973. The St. Clair-Superior Coalition – serving parts of three other wards – has brought blacks, Slovenians, Croatians,

and Irish into similar cooperation. These organizations, like suburban governments, are structured so that no substantial group ever lacks real power within the organization.

Not so, however, the political structure of the City of Cleveland. It is extremely difficult for the Irish on the West Side to perceive their common interest with the Poles on the Southeast Side or with the blacks on the East Side. The West Side Market is not a center for black customers, and Luke Easter Park is not a playground for West Siders. Blight can abound in Hough, but life in West Park will not be noticeably touched.

Within Cleveland wards, the principle of single member representation perpetuates ethnic differences. With only one councilperson to be elected for each 17,000 residents, many ethnic residents who feel unrepresented look to each municipal election as a new opportunity to regain fairer representation at both the city council and the executive levels.

The genius of suburban politics has been to leave no substantial ethnic groups without real participation in government while preserving a general perception that all ethnic groups share a common interest.

Size, Governmental Efficiency, and the Political Process

Size has been a vital factor in effective suburban government. Cities under 50,000 are inherently easier for human beings to manage than cities over 500,000. And in cities of a few square miles, it is easier for residents to recognize their common interest than for residents who live five miles apart.

The service director of a city of 35,000, for example, knows all of his workers personally. He knows who is genuinely ill and who fails to report because of drugs or alcohol. When a resident leaves for vacation, the police watch the house. If something is wrong, the mayor either sees it or hears about it. And, if the mayor won't respond, the suburban resident often has friends on city council who can make the city's employees perform.

Suburban politics is also different. A councilman may spend $10,000 or more to run a successful contested campaign in the City of Cleveland. In wealthy Shaker Heights, a councilman can wage a successful campaign for $2,000 or less. Friends, reputation, and door-to-door handshaking count more than money. Indeed, it is remarkable how a handshake can overcome prejudice.

Mayoral politics offer even greater contrasts between city and suburb. Although business people sometimes contribute substantial sums in suburban politics, they can seldom pick or elect a mayoral candidate. Nor is it the function or the interest of the daily news media to select a candidate to save South Euclid. An important consequence of that diminished power of large contributors and the media is that suburban mayors build their popular base through municipal performance, and they rise or fall on their popular base. Again, personal acquaintanceships between the suburban mayor and a greater percentage of city residents give him or her greater ability to build personal trust than is possible for a big city mayor.

With their real base squarely among resident community leaders and grass roots citizens, suburban mayors do not run as "champions of the people" because the people don't feel they need a champion. The people know that they are the champion. As residents, they have the ability, when needed, to touch and talk directly to the mayor. That ability gives the suburban resident power – both real and perceived.

When suburban mayors or councilmen have problems to resolve, they don't look to the daily news media for public support. The dialogue with constituents is more personal and less distorted by the need to make headlines. The daily news media, at the same time, cover suburban government differently. If corruption and vilification exist in suburban government, the news media are less inclined to bring government to a halt because of it.

Governmental Functions and Politics in the Central City

While the differences in stability and harmony which distinguish central city from suburban government may be largely undisputed, some will claim that the comparison is inappropriate. The conventional wisdom is that the public problems to be solved by municipal government in a large central city are either substantially different or more costly than those in suburbia. After all, the central city is populated by the poor, the elderly, the afflicted, and the oppressed, while suburbanites are rich or middle income, of child-rearing age, healthy, and powerful.

Those facts are substantially accurate but largely irrelevant to the real problems of big city government. None of those differences significantly affects or explains the greater per capita cost of

Cleveland's city government. In 1976, for example, Cleveland spent $234.92 per capita, Shaker Heights, $224.95 per capita, Brooklyn $220.62 per capita, Cleveland Heights, $139.61 per capita, Lakewood, $136.12 per capita, East Cleveland, $127.52 per capita, Parma, $97.88 per capita, and Garfield Heights $93.42 per capita (see Table V).

The poverty of a central city's residents is not a significant factor in the greater cost of central city government. Municipal government, for example, does not now provide welfare payments—that is the function of the county, state, and federal governments.

Municipal government also does not provide low cost housing—that is done by an independent public housing authority and independent nonprofit corporations.

Medical care for the poor is largely financed by the federal and state governments.

Although in 1976 the City of Cleveland's basic municipal services cost $107 more per capita than similar per capita expenses in East Cleveland, the percentage of residents at a poverty level in East Cleveland was comparable to that in Cleveland. For example, the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* (January 6, 1980, page 3AA) reported that in December 1979 East Cleveland had 25.1 percent of its residents receiving either general relief, Aid to Dependent Children, or federal food stamps, while 23.4 percent of Cleveland residents received those benefits. Moreover, there is no evidence that Cleveland's residents receive more from city government than do East Clevelanders.

In 1979, the primary responsibilities of municipal government in the City of Cleveland were not significantly different from those in East Cleveland, Brooklyn, or Garfield Heights. Those responsibilities were to put out fires, collect waste, protect against crime, inspect houses, issue licenses, patrol for traffic, clean streets, repair sidewalks, plant trees, maintain parks, provide recreation programs for the young and elderly, clear abandoned property, and regulate land use.

The poverty where Delphine Dotson, Albert Kish and Mark Mikolic live near the Arrow Publicity factory at West 41st Street on the Near West Side does not impose a burden on the City of Cleveland sufficient to explain the difference between the per capita expenses of Cleveland and Garfield Heights. Albert Kish, with his

small vegetable garden and bathless house, gets nothing special from the city. And the improvements being made by the Dotsons and Mikolics add to the city's tax base. When the house next to the Mikolics' burned, the cost of removal was assessed against its absentee landlord. No analysis is available to determine if the number of fires in Cleveland require firefighters for Cleveland who are not needed in Garfield Heights. Only the hole in the fence at Greenwood Swimming Pool seems clearly to be a special municipal cost of poverty; but until that hole is repaired, it is simply a nuisance and an eyesore – not a financial burden. Even the repair cost would not add more than a dollar to the per capita cost of the residents who might use the pool.

Of course there is a statistical relationship between poverty and crime in child-rearing families and young adults. The financial statistics in Table IV confirm a much higher per capita expenditure in Cleveland for police than in adjacent suburbs; however, the difference of $21 between Cleveland and East Cleveland, for example, does not explain Cleveland's $107 per capita larger expenditure for all basic services. Only in comparison to such high spending suburbs as Brooklyn and Shaker Heights, where service breadth is unusually great and quality high, would Cleveland have lower per capita expenditures if it did not have to shoulder an additional burden because of resident poverty.

If there are differences in the functions performed by the central city and suburbs, it is that the central city undertakes a second level of services not generally performed by the suburbs. The convention facilities, airports, electric utility, workhouse, and public markets are some examples. To the extent that those facilities divert the time of political officials or money from more basic services, they undermine the quality and efficiency of the more basic functions. In the historic growth of city functions they came last. However, in the demands they now make on the time of top city hall leaders, they frequently come first. Their relative priority is the continuing subject of public debate when budgets are to be approved, when newspaper investigations are undertaken, and when mayoral elections are held. By contrast, residential priorities seem secondary.

Cleveland residents often recognize more clearly than do those who write about them what are the important functions of big city government. For example, at a meeting of the Buckeye-

Woodland Community Congress in the spring of 1979, over six hundred residents were entreated by their leaders to seek removal of the city's dog warden (does anyone know his name?) unless a better job was done of catching stray dogs. Dogs are a real problem of daily life on East 116th Street. But the proposed removal of the city's dog warden is not page one news for a mayoral press conference.

The case has never been made that the cost of collecting garbage, repairing streets, catching dogs, or performing any of the other primary municipal functions is inherently greater in the central city than in the suburbs. It is remarkable that, despite the interest in metropolitan government for Greater Cleveland during the last twenty years, no study has ever been done analyzing the cost of waste collection, street repair, or other primary municipal responsibilities of Cleveland compared with those functions in well-managed suburbs adjacent to the central city.

The meager evidence available seems to indicate that inner-city residents pay substantially more per ton for waste collection, more per officer for police protection, and more per mile for street repair than do suburbanites. Yet, it is difficult to understand why the poverty, ill health, or age of inner-city residents should make it more expensive to pick up a ton of trash and garbage from residents on East 79th than from residents on Wellesley Road in East Cleveland or more costly to repair West 80th Street than a nearby residential street in Brooklyn.

Cleveland City Government from a Resident's Perspective. Since ordinary problems like waste collection, dog catching, and police protection are the problems that most concern inner-city residents, it is important to understand the efforts which individual Cleveland residents must expend in seeking redress from municipal malfunctions in those areas. A 1978 lawsuit involving the City of Cleveland, a local business owner, and residents of a middle-income East Side ward illustrates the inner-city resident's perspective on government.

In that case, the residents of East 176th Street were greatly disturbed by traffic congestion on their street and by accidents which had resulted from that congestion at the intersection of their street with Harvard Avenue. The congestion arose because knowledgeable motorists had discovered that East 176th Street was a through route to the newly opened Randall Mall. These

motorists used East 176th Street to avoid traffic lights on Harvard and Warrensville Center Road. The residents of East 176th persuaded their councilman to sponsor legislation that would establish their street as a one-way street.

The owner of an ice cream carry-out stand at the affected intersection brought suit in November 1978 to enjoin the City of Cleveland from implementing the one-way street plan. The carry-out owner alleged that the new traffic pattern would hurt his business.

Through court mediation, the business owner, the residents, and the city Law Department agreed to delay implementing the proposed one-way street plan until a traffic survey could be conducted. Based on the traffic survey, a traffic engineer for the city's Safety Department recommended a modified one-way street plan. The business owner still objected to the modified plan and threatened to continue his lawsuit for money damages.

Thereupon, an assistant safety director, becoming involved for the first time in the dispute nine months after suit was filed, ordered that the modified plan not be implemented and questioned whether the traffic engineer had made an honest traffic evaluation or had merely acquiesced to the complaints of the residents. In June of 1979, nearly a year after the councilman first agreed to secure the one-way street, an assistant city law director (acting on instructions from the assistant safety director) and the private business owner agreed to dismiss the lawsuit and not to proceed with the one-way street.

The mayor of Cleveland and residents of East 176th Street had never discussed the traffic problem. Their councilman was powerless. The crucial decisions had been made entirely by appointed officials. The assistant safety director, who made the controlling decision, had never talked to the complaining residents or their councilman and had never seen the intersection in question.

After nearly a year of litigation, studies, and conferences, the residents were no further ahead in solving their traffic problem than when they had originally gained the support of their councilman. Considerable time and money had been expended for traffic engineers, traffic counters, and a councilman. Yet, the residents' complaints had not only gone unresolved, but the heat of their frustration had been greatly increased by the delay and the rebuff of an invisible assistant safety director. After nearly a year

of effort, the residents had yet another mountain to climb before reaching someone with power to solve their problem.

The entire conflict was a monument to waste, frustration, and unresponsive government.

City Government from a Council's Perspective. As the case of the one-way street illustrates, ordinary citizens in Cleveland find their council representative, not the mayor or the daily newspapers, to be their first line of attack in seeking satisfactory municipal services. If the one-way street problem had arisen in most suburbs, more than one councilperson together with the mayor and a senior technician or administrator would probably have become personally involved at an early stage. In most suburbs, the ombudsman role of the council representative is so shared with other council representatives that few feel solo responsibility for a constituency greater than 10,000, and often the ratio is one councilperson for 5,000 residents. In many suburbs, the mayor is so closely involved with day to day operations and citizen complaints that the council plays only an infrequent role as ombudsman.

But in Cleveland, the council representative's job and city government cannot be understood if council's role as ombudsman is not placed in proper perspective. Except for a few tenured and politically powerful individuals in council, the ombudsman function for Cleveland City Council is its most difficult and most time-consuming responsibility. One city councilman has estimated that approximately 60 percent of his time is spent as ombudsman, 15 percent as legislator, and 25 percent in peripheral politics.

The honest and conscientious councilman or woman in Cleveland easily becomes overwhelmed in attempting to advocate on behalf of his or her ward for better trash collection, rat control, sewer maintenance, and snow removal. The sheer number of resident requests is mountainous. Most representatives receive an average of 30 phone calls per day from constituents. The task of competing for scarce resources against the claims of other wards is nearly insurmountable.

At the same time, the council person must also become knowledgeable about the city-wide problems of fiscal management, tax abatement, utilities management, and the various newsworthy issues that keep the mayor in the public eye. Unfortunately

many of those problems transcend the council persons' daily knowledge gleaned from residence in their own neighborhoods, from personal work experiences, and from their own contacts with the city government.

The magnitude of Cleveland's municipal bureaucracy, the geographic scope of the city services, the multiplicity of special city-wide functions such as the airport or convention center, and the size of the council member's own constituency (now averaging 17,000) make it virtually impossible for an individual in council to have either the knowledge or time to function effectively both as an ombudsman and as a policy-maker.

The council member must choose daily which role to emphasize. In emphasizing policy-making, justifiable demands of constituents are likely to be frustrated. Concentration on the ombudsman role results in the risk of being accused of provinciality by the news media and the area-wide good government critics.

The tension between those two roles encourages demagoguery in some and party loyalty in others. That few members of council accommodate successfully the conflict is reflected in the high turnover rate in the Cleveland City Council's membership, where only three of the 33 members in 1978 had served ten or more years and half had served six years or less.

City Government from a Mayor's Perspective. An inescapable characteristic of any mayor of the City of Cleveland is political ambition. Every mayor of Cleveland in the last 40 years has either viewed or experienced the mayor's post as a stepping-stone to higher office. Harold Burton became a U.S. Senator and Supreme Court Justice. Frank Lausche became Governor and U.S. Senator. Thomas Burke served briefly in the U. S. Senate. Anthony Celebrezze was appointed U. S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. Ralph Perk ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate. Only those who have been defeated as Cleveland's mayor have not gone on to a political position of higher pay and greater geographic scope.

Either to achieve that greater ambition or to retain the office of mayor, an incumbent Cleveland mayor needs to address issues that will attract attention from the mass media. To qualify for media coverage, it is helpful to find an issue which appeals to the media's multi-county constituency. One-way streets and stray dogs are not the political fare of either the mass media or a big city mayor.

Ambition, however, is not the only factor which keeps a Cleveland mayor from becoming intimately involved in small neighborhood concerns. Again, the geographic scope of the city, the magnitude of its population, the multiplicity of its functions, and the size of the municipal bureaucracy make impractical more than a token number of such involvements. Even in an eighteen-hour working day, the mayor of necessity must delegate responsibility for solving individual problems and must focus personal energies on the broader matters of budget, overall policies, councilmanic relations, cabinet level personnel, major interest groups, and public ceremonies.

Even a mayor whose primary concern is governmental administration finds it difficult to ensure the sound execution of policies. Municipal policies must be implemented by political subordinates through two, three, or more layers of civil service bureaucracy. No accounting system exists to determine if the ultimate workers—the zone car police, the housing inspectors, or the waste collectors—are working up to capacity. The output of such workers cannot easily be measured in units of production as in a factory or in volume of sales as in retailing. And there is no real profit and loss sheet on municipal performance except at the ballot box.

At the same time, the mayor finds that the civil service bureaucracy functions overwhelmingly, like every bureaucracy, to conceal its failures, to obscure responsibility, and to pursue its own policies. The civil service employee most often serves the mayor's interest simply by avoiding controversy. In government, there are few rewards for the administrator who identifies problems and initiates reform. Thus, even the mayor who wants to change and improve governmental practices finds it difficult to identify the weak programs and the defective personnel in the governmental apparatus.

For decades now, the primary approach of the typical Cleveland mayor has, therefore, been to select an image to project and to engage through the media in the image-making process without intensive attention to the day-to-day problems that concern residents and inundate council representatives.

City Government from the Perspective of Civil Service Employees. The civil service employee is the real decision-maker for most of the fundamental municipal services that touch residents. A political crisis or a vital mayoral priority is usually necessary to

bring the day-to-day work of civil service employees to the attention of the mayor or his or her immediate political associates. The civil service employee has a vested interest in the status quo, in freedom from supervisory interruption, and in higher wages. Often conscientious, usually honest, and nearly certain to outlast the political members of government, the civil service employee frequently has his or her own agenda and own policies. Those agendas and interests are protected for nearly all municipal workers by unions, and the municipal union leaders are important policy-makers who negotiate with the mayor and the appointed cabinet.

In the process of executing programs and addressing resident concerns, the civil servants and council members curry favor with each other. A successful councilperson is one who makes friends with or exercises power over key members of the civil service bureaucracy. Similarly, a successful civil servant has the same relations with council.

Perhaps the most striking example of civil service power in Cleveland was the waste collection disaster that occurred in the spring of 1979. A series of newspaper articles reported that uncollected trash had been accumulating for weeks in many city neighborhoods so that yards were severely littered and some streets nearly impassable. A City Council hearing revealed a major cause of the failure was that the absenteeism rate in the Waste Collection Department was 50 percent. In what suburb could such employment practices have prevailed or have so long gone undetected? Only where the civil service employees are stronger than the politically appointed supervisor can such a situation exist.

Even when the civil service employee reports for work, serious questions often exist as to the worker's production standard. For example, in Cleveland's waste collection department during the 1970s, waste collectors were paid for an eight-hour day but required only to service a specific route. When the route was completed the collector could go home with a full day's pay. The system gave highest priority to speed and lowest priorities to quality of performance and a full day's work.

A visit by the author to a Cleveland playground in the course of gathering material for this book revealed another kind of production problem. An unmarked city truck was observed at about
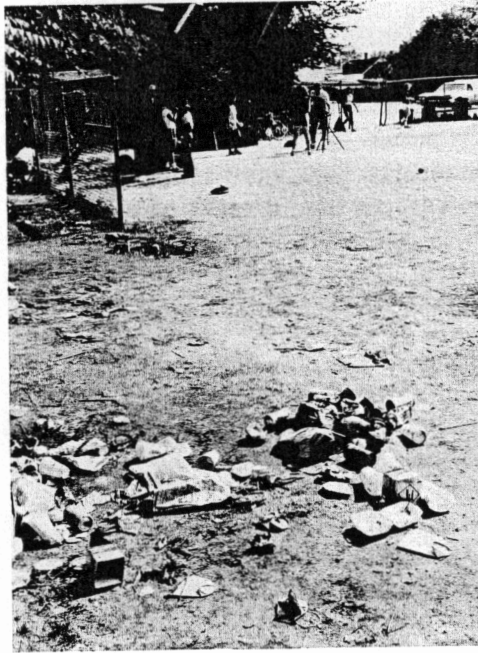
Uncollected litter on a
Cleveland playground.

E. MIRSKY
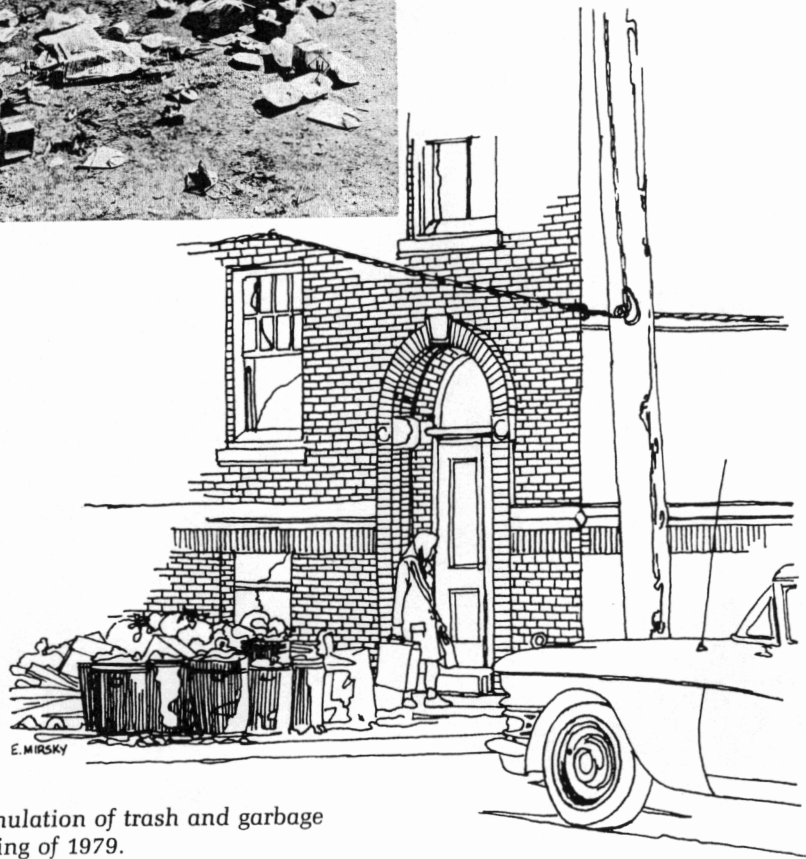
Accumulation of trash and garbage
in spring of 1979.

10:30 a. m. parked in the middle of the playground unattended. Its crew, assigned to pick up trash, was nowhere near. After a five minute search the crew was spotted some seventy-five yards from the truck concealed and seated in a grandstand. A later conversation with the crew leader revealed that he lived in a nearby suburb but owned four houses in the general vicinity of the playground. One would be justified in speculating from that experience on how much of the crew leader's paid time was spent on city work, how much on personal business, and how much resting. The appearance of the playfields for which the crew was responsible suggested that city work got low priority from the crew leader.

The nature of politics and civil service in Cleveland city government has afforded such extraordinary power to lower level city employees. Hiring is, in fact, the starting point for such power. As long as anyone can remember, hiring at nearly every level outside of the safety forces has been almost entirely political. Work in the mayor's campaign, friendship with a cabinet officer or member of council, or family ties to an existing employee have been prerequisites to employment. Minimal qualifications may be required for hiring, but seldom does the city compete in the job market at the civil service level for the most qualified. Through that hiring process, entire city departments have become fiefdoms of particular ethnic groups based upon an accumulation of contacts and ties which have given many employees near immunity from supervisory discipline. A supervisor who tries to impose standards that contravene the prevailing work ethic or that threaten a particular employee finds that the employee may work for the supervisor in theory but, in fact, the employee has such a multitude of ties to council members, influential relatives, friends, or union leaders that the employee can set his or her own standard of performance.

The Interplay of Political Forces in Big City Government. It must be apparent that the real process of government in the City of Cleveland, as in any large city, operates on two levels. One level addresses the day-to-day concerns of those who are the intended recipients of services. That level features the political interplay of resident, councilperson, and civil servant. Most municipal activities occur at that level. In that process, individual council members and selected civil servants make nearly every crucial decision

that affects a particular ward. It is invisible and often autocratic; but none of the participants in that process has substantial control over budget allocations.

The other level addresses city-wide policy including budget decisions. It enjoys the most publicity but only a few councilpersons, the mayor, top level administrators, and union leaders engage on that level. The overriding visible issues for years in Cleveland government have tended to be taxes, wages, and job security; but the resolution of those issues has seemed to have little bearing on the actual quality of service at the neighborhood level. A major reason is that those who have power to control policy and allocate funds in fact exercise only infrequent or insignificant power over the individuals who actually spend the budgeted money, police the streets, collect the garbage, or perform other basic city services.

Events in Cleveland over the last fifteen years and longer have demonstrated that Cleveland's municipal government has not been working well on either the level of local service delivery or on the level of city-wide policy making. City-wide policy making has long been characterized by confrontation and acrimony – good for the politicians and the media but not good for the people. Neighborhood service delivery has been characterized by excessive costs, low productivity, and unresponsiveness.

Viewed overall, Cleveland's political process has been historically torn asunder by four inherently competing factions – residents pushing council representatives and civil servants for services; overworked council representatives struggling to comprehend the totality of city operations while responding to the service demands of their constituents; entrenched civil service employees, each claiming his or her function is most important and having substantial independence; and a mayor devoting only minimal attention to service delivery problems while operating through political deputies who find themselves often frustrated by residents, government workers, and council representatives who often do not share the mayor's values.