

Chapter 4

City Size and City Management

The largely wasteful and unproductive way in which Cleveland's government functions can be better understood if city government is compared to a single retail shoe business attempting to serve the shoe needs of all Cleveland's residents. That shoe business would need to operate from fifteen or twenty locations even if it did not have a monopoly on shoes for Cleveland. Shoes of satisfactory quality would have to be stocked; and courtesy and honesty of employees would have to be closely monitored. Performance standards would have to be established. The ultimate monitor would be the profit and loss statement for each retail outlet.

The company's president would have a single goal—to maximize profits by selling shoes. There would be a need to have close control over purchasing and sales personnel either directly or through trusted personnel. Stock would have to be modified to meet the tastes of the local community. Each retail outlet would not have an identical merchandise mix.

Unless operations were firmly established, the president would have to attend single-mindedly to the shoe business. The board of directors would receive financial reports to evaluate the business's performance. The management of such a business is difficult even with a clear goal (profits), a good shoe, a sound training program, careful supervision, and an adequate accounting system to measure performance and ultimate results.

What most differentiates city government from the hypothetical retail shoe business is that there is no accounting system to measure performance. Quality depends on the reliability of thousands of independent workers whose product is delivered directly without prior inspection or on-site supervision. Even the most conscientious mayor could not measure and control the ultimate output of municipal waste collection without a system of citizen feedback either directly or through council representatives. If that feedback occurs but the mayor's time is primarily devoted to personal interests and other city problems, the basic delivery of services cannot be managed by the chief executive.

Similarly, if the councilperson receives a complaint about services but is unable to pursue it because of the press of other complaints or the need to participate in general policy-making, services cannot be effectively monitored. Moreover, if there is no accounting system to measure the quality of performance by city workers, the council member cannot know if the complaint against a particular employee is justified or if it is a common failure; without an accounting system to measure performance, a councilman cannot monitor city services effectively unless there is personal knowledge of the individual municipal service employees or their supervisors, time to pursue particular citizen complaints, and basic agreement between the mayor and councilman on municipal priorities. In Cleveland, few of those essential ingredients ever exist, and they certainly never exist on a city-wide basis.

Those deficiencies stem primarily from the quantity of individual complaints, the frequent turnover in mayors and ward representatives, and the geographic and ethnic differences as to priorities in Cleveland. So long as those factors preclude effective executive control of the labor force, prevent effective consumer monitoring of service delivery, and forestall prompt or longlasting resolutions as to policy differences, Cleveland's municipal government will continue to function like a bankrupt shoe chain. At the core of all of those causes is Cleveland's size—both geographic and in the number of the city's residents—and the number of functions it attempts to perform.

A Closer View of Two City Services

A more detailed examination of two basic municipal functions—police protection and park preservation—reveals more fully how governmental size relates to efficiency, responsiveness, and initiative.

Police Protection. Repeated recent studies of urban police departments show that the dramatic activities of T.V. police officers in pursuing big-time crime or fleeing felons occupy a very minor portion of the work efforts of real-life, big city policemen. Much higher percentages of police time are spent in responding to domestic disputes, complaints about disruptive neighbors, reports of stolen cars, vandalism, and juvenile misbehavior. Even the most responsive police officers usually arrive when the criminal is far

from the scene. Courtesy, tact, and persistence are more significant than a fleet foot or a quick draw for a successful police officer in those situations. Those qualities are not glamorous and do not sell media advertising, but they are of high importance to a city resident's evaluation of police functioning.

When inner-city residents are concerned about the crimes which are publicized in the media—vice, narcotics, and other forms of organized crime—many regard their councilman, not the chief of police, as the first line of defense. For many Cleveland neighborhoods, it is often the councilman who receives the first tip on a house being used for prostitution or narcotics. Inner-city residents often do not trust the police to respond without political pressure. To overcome that suspected resistance, inner-city residents expect the councilman to pass their tips on to the police and, thereafter, to police the police.

When a burglary, robbery, or rape occurs, the police usually do not play an arresting function but discharge largely information-gathering and hand-holding roles. Most burglars and robbers are caught not because the police respond quickly but because the criminal bungles or the victims protect themselves or recognize the offender. Nine times out of ten even a quick police response is too late. Courtesy, tact, and persistence plus a thorough crime scene investigation and cooperation from possible witnesses again are essential to effective police work.

Effective police work requires base line officers who respect the residents they serve and who receive respect from those residents in return. In Cleveland, the failure of some police officers to show concern, courtesy, and tact in dealing with local residents is a common complaint. The failure of the police to display those qualities was of major importance in exacerbating the urban riots of the sixties. Contrary to the alarms of some politicians and writers, riots most frequently have arisen not from unemployment or outside agitators, but from an insensitive criminal justice system—especially the police. Although Cleveland police have improved in sensitivity since the sixties, many Cleveland residents who are victims of crime and call for police help still find the responding police officers rude or uncaring.

Cleveland's large population and large police force have created a constant conflict between the interests of neighborhood responsiveness and strong supervision. The size of the city and its

police force has required the police department to be decentralized into six districts, each commanded by an inspector or other high officer. The districts are subdivided, in turn, into zones often supervised by lesser grade officers.

Leadership of a particular district has often lacked responsiveness to the police chief downtown. At the same time, the district's commander has had a large population (100,000 to 150,000) to serve and a large body of personnel to supervise (250-400). The district commander's supervision has been diluted through a layer of lieutenants and sergeants. The base line patrolman and detective—insulated from the district commander and police chief, protected by their union, and functioning on a buddy system of two-man patrols—have had great freedom to adopt their own police styles and ethics.

The ethical problem may even affect those responsible for honesty. For example, during a 1970s trial of a police bribery case, the officer in charge of the investigation testified that he conducted surveillance of the suspected bribery from a car belonging to a major police towing contractor. The car had been given to him for his permanent personal use. It never occurred to this investigating officer, responsible for ferreting out police dishonesty, that the car he was driving was a form of graft. No superior officer or civilian official had approved the officer's receipt of that gift from a city contractor; but the officer evidenced no embarrassment in testifying about it, and no action was taken against him for it.

To maintain some control at the top of the police hierarchy, a dominant concern for years of the police chief in Cleveland has been to break up cliques and entrenchments of power at the district and zone level. When the famed Eliot Ness became Cleveland's Safety Director under Mayor Burton, Ness took control by consolidating Cleveland's 16 police districts with their separate station houses and jails into the present six districts. More recently, cliques have been prevented by frequent transfers of all police personnel from district to district and between the district and the central police headquarters. A five- to seven-year turnover of personnel at the district level is not unusual in the Cleveland Police Department.

Frequent transfers are essential in a large police department even if loyalty and honesty are not significant worries. Knowledgeable police leadership at central police headquarters requires

top commanders who have worked in a variety of positions and geographic sectors. Thus, there are positive as well as negative reasons which force a large police organization into a policy of personnel assignment that is incompatible with the best service to consumers of police service.

While the transfer system has preserved a semblance of top-level control that has prevented gross inefficiency and widespread corruption, it has also prevented large numbers of dedicated police officers from providing their highest level of esprit de corps. The kind of close cooperation and respect between officers and residents that stems from long-standing relationships, professional pride, and community loyalty is lost when policemen are moved from zone to zone and when district teams are broken.

Also dominant factors in the Cleveland Police Department are the two police unions. Although the union strength is necessary to protect the men from hostile residents, politicians, and arbitrary supervisors, unionism undermines the co-operation among politicians, police supervisors, base line officers, and residents that is necessary for an effective public safety program.

The combined interaction of conflicting union loyalty among police officers and the impotence of big government have produced in Cleveland a police department that is tolerant of inefficiency, minor corruption, and discourtesy to citizens. It is doubtful that a single police officer has been released from the Cleveland police force in four decades because of discourteous treatment of civilians. Brutality may bring only a transfer.

By contrast, in suburban police forces both discourtesy and brutality to residents typically bring forced resignations, if not legal action. The example of suburban police departments is that they tend, on the whole, to have a high level of morale, respond quickly and courteously to complaints, perform at a high level of professionalism in investigating crime, and have low levels of corruption.

There are exceptions to be sure. But those exceptions, because they are isolated in separate municipalities, are not likely to become the rotten apples that will ruin an entire barrel of suburban police departments in the Cleveland metropolitan area, and where problems become apparent, either the civilian government or electorate is sufficiently strong in the overwhelming number of suburbs to correct the deficiency. The reputation of suburban police

departments is high among those county officials who see them on a daily basis in the criminal justice system.

The fears of some political theorists that the smaller suburban police forces would be financially inefficient and would be impaired by jurisdictional limitations have not been borne out by experience. The primary police investment is in personnel, not in equipment. Thus, effective personnel management is more important to cost effectiveness than the ability of a typical suburban police department to spread capital costs over a large tax base.

Similarly, experience has demonstrated that geographic boundaries do not limit the ability of suburban police to pursue the perpetrators of crime in their areas. The legal doctrine of "hot pursuit" enables suburban police to pursue across municipal boundaries and arrest in other jurisdictions; professional courtesies are also extended by neighboring police departments so that they often assist each other in investigating crimes after the suspect has eluded police and concealed himself or evidence in another city; and many suburbs have signed written cooperation agreements by which one police department agrees to respond to calls for help by residents in another suburb or in which detective activities are pooled.

The lesson of police departments in those suburbs having a certain minimum population—approximately 10,000—is that they are able to perform every essential police function of the large central city at a per capita and per officer cost that is lower than in the central city or at a performance level that is equal to or higher than that of the central city police department. Two studies—one published in the book *Policing Metropolitan America* by Ostrim, Parks and Whitaker and the other entitled *The Economics of Scale and Municipal Police Services* by Norman Walzer support this conclusion.

A comparison of available ratios of police officers to population for the City of Cleveland as a whole, for one Cleveland Police District, and for certain adjacent suburbs in May, 1980 reveals that while the City of Cleveland as a whole has a substantially better ratio of police to residents than do suburbs, Cleveland's neighborhoods have a worse ratio than the suburbs. If Cleveland were to have the same ratio of officers to residents as there are in East Cleveland, it would have 909 police officers—less than half of its present complement.

One reason for this greater number of total Cleveland police officers is the extensive use of two-man police cars in Cleveland. But two-man police cars are not the sole explanation. Another reason is that neighborhoods, even with two-man cars, receive less than their proportionate share of the assigned officers. The disequilibrium is caused by large numbers of officers being assigned to the downtown area, where resident population is low, and to central police headquarters. The obvious conclusion is that city-wide resources are being used to subsidize downtown needs and to maintain central control while neighborhood needs and decentralized control receive lower priority. If neighborhood priorities were emphasized, the Fourth District might have enjoyed in 1980 the 1-616 ratio of police to residents the East Cleveland experienced instead of its 1-850 ratio.

Parks. One of the great tragedies in Cleveland since World War II has been the decline of its park system. Once heralded as the "Forest City," most of Cleveland's parks were in place by 1900. From 1950 to 1975, however, the city lost many acres of parkland. In the period from 1965 to 1975, annual expenditures for parks (not counting recreation activities and shade trees) declined from over \$2,000,000 to \$741,000.

Parks are not a governmental frill. They enhance surrounding property values because they enhance life. Just as waste collection, a component of sanitation, is vital to a resident's physical health and police protection relates to personal safety, so parks play an important part in human mental health. They are the places where children play, lovers embrace, and older persons stroll. The rural poor are exhilarated by the entire outdoors; but poor urban dwellers add nothing but depression to their lives if we offer dilapidated parks to their already sparse homes. And if parks are lost or allowed to deteriorate or become unsafe, the livability of the surrounding area declines.

The loss of Cleveland's park acreage since 1950 and the deterioration of remaining park property are directly related to political will. Compared to improved land, the market value of parkland is low; and it is the first target of road builders, other municipal departments, and expanding industry. Cleveland's parkland was lost not because of the city's mounting fiscal burdens but because the residents most affected by the threatened parkland lacked the

political clout to resist those who wanted to divert the land to other uses.

That conclusion is illustrated by comparing a successful suburban battle to protect the Shaker Lakes from highway acquisition in the 1960s and 70s and Cleveland's response to the same demand for highway rights of way. The political battle in each community was over the Lee and Clark Freeways—an enterprise that most greatly benefits residents of the outer suburbs. Land for the Clark Freeway through Cleveland involved substantial loss of parkland. Acquisition of that property brought little resistance from Cleveland officials. However, when it was revealed that the eastern extension of the Clark Freeway, together with a proposed northern spur from Interstate 480, would virtually obliterate one Shaker Lake and other Shaker Heights parkland, affected Shaker and Cleveland Heights residents revolted.

Initially, those residents were opposed by the mayors and city councils of both suburbs, who felt that resistance to interstate highways was futile. However, within the relatively small constituencies of those suburbs, the affected residents were able to make their small numbers felt. Ultimately, the mayors and councilmen joined them in a political march to the county engineer's office, the governor's office, and to Washington. In Washington, the freeway fighters found some allies in the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. They gained support of their congressmen and state representatives. Throughout this entire effort, the mayor and council of Cleveland were virtual bystanders, but thousands of residents in Cleveland's East Side neighborhoods benefited from the suburban endeavor to stop the eastward extension of the freeway.

Although Shaker and Cleveland Heights residents tend to possess wealth and influence not available to inner-city residents, none of the suburban leaders in the Lee-Clark Freeway conflict possessed prominent wealth or influence. Indeed, at the outset, the mayors and city council representatives were reluctant to offend state officials by opposing freeway extensions that might not occur for six or ten years. The primary strength of the residential freeway fighters was that their numbers and contacts were more effective in constituencies of 60,000 or less than in a city of over a half million. They had fewer city officials to influence and closer ties to them than they would have had in a much larger city.

An example of the comparative impotence of Cleveland residents to oppose loss of parkland was seen in 1973 when residents of East 93rd and Kinsman sought to prevent the building of a police station on the western portion of Woodland Hills (now Luke Easter) Park. An adequate, cleared alternative site existed close-by on private property, but its acquisition cost was considerably higher than the land zoned for park use. The councilperson for the area did not support the residents because she believed that the lower cost justified diversion of the parkland to the Police Department. The residents who fought the proposed police station lived close to the intended site, and they were simply portrayed as selfish individuals trying to thwart public safety to protect their own property. As a result, a large part of the only portion of Woodland Hills Park suitable to undisturbed play by small children was destroyed, private houses abutting it were diminished in value, but there is no evidence to date that the new police station has reduced the crime rate.

Consider how different the result might have been if land use at East 93rd and Kinsman had been controlled by any suburb, rich or poor, but having a small constituency. Is it not likely that one or more of the council members would have taken up the cause of the residents, especially when it became apparent that the new police station contained a port for landing helicopters in that residential area? Is it not likely that important modifications would have been made in many aspects of the police station's design even if its location was not changed?

As it was, the residents near Woodland Hills Park learned of the proposed station only at the last minute. The city officials refused to delay construction while resident complaints were under discussion. The parkland was destroyed and trees demolished by a ground-breaking before the residents even consulted a lawyer. No significant design changes were made.

The lesson seems clear – in battles to preserve residential assets, residents in smaller political units have greater political power than residents in larger political units.

Size and Corruption. When governments violate the private work ethic or fail to provide services or protection, voters withhold taxes. When public failures involve dishonesty, governments often fall. *Size and corruption* have so long been associated in municipal politics that a discussion of the topic may seem trite.

Nearly every large city in America, including Cleveland, has had its era of corruption at the very top. After Cleveland adopted the city-manager form of government in 1924, the finger of corruption shifted to lower levels. Despite decades of mayors respected for their integrity, Cleveland has never been able fully to restore public trust to its other public officials.

Between 1975 and 1980, three significant scandals scarred City Hall. Two involved council members. Seven council members, altogether, were indicted for alleged acceptance of bribes. One was convicted and imprisoned. Three were acquitted, and charges against the others were dismissed. A third scandal involved a scheme of embezzling city fire hydrants which was uncovered among middle management and basic employees. Indictments and convictions were returned. A fourth, perhaps minor, scandal budded in 1980 when a study of Cleveland's municipal bureaucracy by private business executives disclosed corruption in, of all places, the municipal dog pound. Prize animals seized as strays were being sold for personal gain by city dog wardens and keepers. The total of corrupt activities uncovered in suburban government during this same period was minute by comparison.

Dishonesty has many sources. Sometimes the employee is inherently dishonest. Even the best system will make mistakes by hiring inherently corrupt individuals. All that can be expected is that the system, itself, will uncover and discard the dishonest employee. In Cleveland, the governmental system has not been notably successful in discovering and uprooting dishonesty on its own.

The worst system is one that tempts corruption even from the honest citizen, businessman, political official, or public employee. That failing for Cleveland was revealed in the mid 1970s when the Cleveland Clinic—world renowned as a medical center—became embroiled in bribing a Cleveland city councilman.

Successful institutions like Cleveland Clinic often appear to their poorer residential neighbors to prevail where the poor cannot. But their success is only partial and at unnecessary cost. Cleveland Clinic, for example, has had a reputation in its neighborhood of being aloof. Its land development strategy has been to wall out the surrounding neighborhood—in part because the city was too unresponsive for it to join in a common effort. In the early

1970s its officials participated in a bribe of the local councilman to secure a zoning approval.

One reason that bribery became an acceptable choice to Cleveland Clinic officials was that even an institution with its power and prestige was not confident it could communicate with the mayor and the warring factions at City Hall. Cleveland Clinic did not, in fact, have the necessary network of friends at City Hall to believe it could resist the solicitation of money by a councilman. Bribing only one councilman was sufficient because in a council of 33 members, each of whom serves an area sufficient to be a subcity, no other council representative will question a colleague's preference on zoning matters in the colleague's ward.

Cleveland Clinic's strategy over the years has been perceived by many residents as buying land, then using its power to force the city government to accept its land planning scheme. Any prior discussions that, in fact, have occurred with city officials have historically been invisible to and distrusted by many nearby residents. Because the problems of communication in a big city have seemed so difficult, Cleveland Clinic often has found itself at war with the adjacent community.

If Cleveland Clinic were obliged to deal with a smaller government, communications might seem easier to its leaders; and the bribery its agents employed in the 1970's would have seemed far less practical to its decision-makers. With a more localized government to solicit, Cleveland Clinic would probably have found ways to establish positive communication and publicly to invest more extensively in neighborhood projects that create community goodwill. Although the corruption of a city official by anyone is not to be excused, it is nonetheless important to understand how the complexity and concentration of power in a big city government tempts corruption even from those who hold themselves out to be above such perfidy.

The Missing Ingredients in Large Cities. In summary, size would seem to have the inherent capacity to cripple large cities in four ways. First, it makes communication difficult between the consumers of public service and the managers of the service. Second, poor communication with the service consumers undermines the ability of top management to evaluate and correct the performance of those who directly render service. Next, the sheer number of problems renders superficial the attention to individual

problems of even the most dedicated top manager. Finally frustration and temptation then conspire to enhance opportunities for dishonesty. In such an environment, distrust and conflict easily reach extreme proportions.

Studies conducted in the 1970s by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, the National Academy of Public Administration, and scholars such as Elinor Ostrom, Roger Parks, and Gordon Whittaker have confirmed that economies of scale in service delivery do not result once a city exceeds 25,000 residents. Practical and historical analyses seem to suggest further that excessive size is, in fact, an administrative liability.