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REGIONALIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE
WITH AN EMPHASIS ON FIRE SERVICE

BY

GERALD M. NEWCOMBE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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I wish to acknowledge the assistance and support my wife, Barbara, and our family provided in the successful completion of this paper.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Public Administrators are constantly searching for ways to provide required services at minimum cost. Today's economic situation makes this need even more prevalent. There are demands for improved services coupled with demands for lower taxes. Therefore public Administrators must find methods to meet these demands where ever it is economically and politically feasible.

This paper will explore some of the methods being used by public agencies today: Consolidation of departments within an agency, consolidation of agencies, joint use of some facilities and equipment by neighboring agencies, contractual agreements between public entities, and contractual agreements between public agencies and private companies. The author will show the advantages and disadvantages of these agreements.

This paper will study regionalized public services in general and regionalized fire protection in particular. There will also be a look at consolidation of fire protection agencies as a possible alternative. The data have been gathered by studying the documents of various public agencies, interviewing officials in certain public agencies and evaluating written information available through library

sources.

Chapter I is the introduction and will contain the purpose of the paper, the methodology, and the chapter review.

Chapter II is a general look at regionalized public service. Joint powers agreement and contractual agreements will be explained and several examples will be presented.

Chapter III is a close look at regionalized fire protection. The effect of Proposition 13 on the fire service is discussed with respect to its pressure for more economical fire protection.

Chapter IV is a study of total consolidation as a viable alternative. Examples are cited to illustrate the effect of consolidation for public safety agencies. Their advantages and disadvantages are discussed.

Chapter V is a summary and conclusion on regionalization, functional consolidation and total consolidation.

Chapter II

REGIONALIZED PUBLIC SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important changes in local government in recent years has been the growing awareness of the need for cooperative activity. People are no longer restricted to the boundaries of a single city or county, whether rural, suburban or urban. The rapid growth and modernization of our nation has brough with it a highly mobile, highly demanding public which is involved daily with a number of local governments. Today's citizen rarely works, lives, shops, and enjoys his recreation within a single jurisdiction.[1]

There are many problems facing local governments today that cross jurisdictional boundaries, i.e.: Transportation, economic development, environment, law enforcement, health protection, and fire protection. The fire service has been involved in regional service for many years. Fire administrators recognize that fires can rapidly spread from one jurisdiction to another and in order to provide adequate fire protection political boundaries should be ignored.

A region is a group of neighboring local communities whose residents are joined as a unit economically, socially,

and geographically, but lack governmental unity. The regional approach is an effort to construct a political process and governmental system which relates to these new regional communities and their challenges.[2]

Regionalizing any public service is not always easy. The idea is to provide coordination or integration of services so that they operate as an articulated single system. It seems logical to establish a regional approach in those areas where there is a linkage between the corresponding service area and populations. Several communities that have attempted to establish a regionalized schedule of services have found that progress can be difficult. It has also been found that these attempts often involve facing limitations of resources, overcoming organization inertia, and fighting against professional parochialism, entrenched interest and highly-prized political values.[3]

The late John F. Kennedy summed up the need for a regional approach 20 years ago in his first message to congress:

> "The city and its suburbs are interdependent parts of a single community bound together by the web of transportation and other public facilities and by common economic interests. Bold programs in individual jurisdictions are no longer enough. Increasingly, community development must be a cooperative venture toward the common goals of the establishment of an effective and comprehensive planning process in each metropolitan area, embracing all activities, both public and private, which shape the community. Such a process must be democratic--for only when the citizens of a community that participated in selecting the goals which will shape their environment

can they be expected to support the actions necessary to accomplish these goals..."

There are several alternatives to regionalized public service which include:

Assumption of local service by state or federal agencies.

Special districts organized to deliver local service on a regional basis.

Transfer of responsibilities from one agency to another.

Joint powers agreements.

Consolidation.

ASSUMPTION OF CONTROL BY STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCIES

The Federal government and some state governments are creating agencies that assume control in local areas of certain functions. Air and water quality standards and land use planning are examples where state or Federal government agencies have been established. An example is the Bay Area Conservation and Development Authority which has been established to control the use of the San Francisco Bay and surrounding coast land.

The 27 member commission was created by the California legislature in 1965 in response to citizen concern for the future of San Francisco Bay. Originally the commission was to last only four years and would disband when an operating plan was complete. It was subsequently decided by the legislature to make the commission a permanent agency to carry out the plan.

In 1969 the commission received permanent status and was charged with three major areas of responsibility. Number one: Regulate all filling, changes in existing use, and dredging in the bay. Number two: Have limited jurisdiction within a 100 foot strip inland from the bay. The charge to the commission was to maintain public access to the bay. Also the commission was asked to insure suitable development on the bay front. Number three: Control the filling of salt ponds of wetlands that were diked off from the bay. It is recognized that while these areas are not subject to tides they provide wildlife habitat and water surface important to the climate of the bay area.

In 1977 the state legislature charged the commission with a fourth responsibility, to implement the Suison Marsh Preservation Act. This gives the commission similar control over the Suison Marsh which is adjacent to the bay. The commission was composed of representatives from the federal, state, and local governments and the general public.[4]

Since San Francisco Bay effects so many different cities and counties as well as the state, a commission of this type was the answer. It allowed for a standard method of dealing the with problem of the bay and those who wished to use it.

Air quality control is an area that involves several

levels of government. State law gives cities the authority to adopt air pollution control measures although most have traditionally left control to the counties. The exception to this is the South Coast Air Quality Management District in which the counties share representation on the governing board with cities. The framework for air pollution control in the South Coast basin is based largely upon statutory authority found in the Clean Air Act Amendments (42 U.S.C. 1857 Federal); the Murford-Carreh Act of 1967 (State) and the Lewis Air Quality Management Act of 1976 (Regional). Air quality management certainly demonstrates the need for some form of regional control.

William Simmons and Robert H. Cutting, Jr., in a 1974 article in the Hastings Law Journal, conclude:

> "That air pollution is a regional phenomenon. At least in areas where the problem of air contaminants is relatively serious, the benefits of "grass roots" local control are outweighed by the need for regional regulation and for a strong state regulatory agency to supervise the activities of local and regional agencies to insure that certain standards are met throughout the state."

The California legislature has created a regional district of local elected officials and one public member to manage air quality in the South Coast Air Basin. The United States Congress has amended the Clean Air Act to require states to consult with local elected officials in each non-attainment area prior to designating agencies to prepare plans for attaining and maintaining federal air standards. Congress has requested that these agencies

be made up of local elected officials. By the action of the state and federal legislatures it is possible to retain local government participation and strengthen regional planning.

There can be serious ramifications in any take-over of local functions by a state of Federal agency. A layer of bureaucracy is added and the citizens do not have local elected officials to contact if they have a problem. The authority and stature of local government is dimimished. Home rule is a very important commodity to most elected officials and they will not give it up willingly. Equal taxation is another problem created when there is an assumption of local authority by the state or Federal government. If a percentage tax is applied the more affluent communities pay a higher portion of the tax. If a per capita tax is used it can put a burden on those less able to pay.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS

A special purpose district is one device used to provide local service on a regional basis. There are many different types of special districts. Water, fire and sewer are the ones that occur the most, but there are others, such as: Lighting, park, soil conservation, mosquito abatement, transit, and health. The special district is usually concerned with only one functional service and it collects taxes to provide that service.

The governing body is usually independently elected or appointed.

However, there are serious weaknesses to the special district or functional approach. The very ease of their creation has tended to produce a multiplicity of individual districts which are not politically accountable or responsive to coordination with other functional programs. This further aggravates the very problem they were created to avoid--uncoordinated unresponsive governmental programs. These single purpose districts also chip away at local governmental perogatives and seriously weakens the authority of local governments and the public. Furthermore, once established, the special districts seem particularly difficult to abolish or modify, since there is very little voter control. Even in those instances where the governing body is appointed by local elected officials the longevity of the appointments aggravates the possibility of control.[5]

TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The transfer of responsibility is another method used by local governments to provide service that is necessary but economically not feasible for the local entity. Some of the services that are transferred are health, library, welfare, police, fire and transportation.

An example is the transfer of health service by San Bernardino City to San Bernardino County. It was

mutually agreed that both the city of San Bernardino and the county of San Bernardino were interested in securing uniform enforcement of all laws and ordinances pertaining to the public health and sanitation within the incorporated area of the city and the unincorporated area immediately adjacent to the city. It was also agreed that the county was equipped to provide the services. The agreement between the two agencies does not stipulate that the city shall pay for the services provided, but that any monies derived from the issuing of permits by the county, or other fees shall be collected by the county health department and deposited with the county treasurer. The agreement further states that the permit costs or fees shall be in accordance with the city schedule.[6]

CONTRACTURAL AGREEMENTS

Another technique that is frequently used is the interlock agreement or contract where one governmental agency contracts with another to provide a specific service for a fee.

One of the most notable examples of this technique is the Los Angeles County's "Lakewood Plan". Los Angeles had been contracting to provide services to cities within the county since 1907, but for the most part these contracts covered individual functions agreed to on an ad hoc basis. During the post World War II period, older cities, which were eager to annex new areas, offered as inducement a

variety of municipal services. In 1954 Los Angeles County reacted by adopting a new contract policy designed to enhance the attractiveness of incorporation rather than annexation. This new policy promised almost all municipal services to any city within the county. Lakewood voted to accept the new plan and thereby set an influential trend for intergovernmental agreements.[7]

Montgomery County, Maryland has adopted a method of assisting smaller municipalities in its county with contractual agreements. A municipal advisory board was formed to deal with the eleven incorporated cities. The group was formed by county executive in order to accomplish the following six principle objectives:[8]

- -Provide a means by which the county executive would be alerted to possible problems peculiar to the county's policies which relate to them.
- -Provide a forum for representatives of the subjurisdictions to air their views and express their opinions on county policies which relate to them.
- -Provide a means of coordinating the services and activities of county government with those of its municipalities.
- -Provide a formal mechanism to study city/county relationships, and thereby develop more meaningful intergovernmental programs.
- -Provide a vehicle for carrying out solutions to intergovernmental problems.
- -Maintain a formal and continuous liaison between the county and its municipalities.

As with many small cities throughout the nation the cities in Montgomery found that it was not cost effective to maintain forces to provide the necessary services.

Therefore, the alternative was to contract with private firms for such services as road repairs, refuse collection, and snow removal. However, the jobs were usually small and require the mobilization of large and expensive machinery, which is not always economical for a private firm. The firm must transport its equipment (often many miles from its home base or previous job) to perform a very small job, for which the city usually cannot afford to pay the going rate.

The county, on the other hand, performs these same services for the areas outside the cities, which means that when the county is working in the general area of a small municipality it can provide the service at a fraction of the cost to a private contractor. Under the guidance of the municipal advisory board, the county has developed a simple, non-profit contract system by which it can quickly perform basic services such as road repair for the county's smaller municipalities. The municipality pays for the services on a direct-cost basis, which is considerably lower than hiring a private firm.[9]

This plan allows the cities to maintain home rule and, at the same time, provide a high level of cost effective service to its citizens.

JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT

A joint powers agreement is one method of providing a service that is of mutual interest to the agencies in-

volved.

In March of 1976 a joint powers agreement was established in the county of San Bernardino creating a county-wide transportation authority known as "Omnitrans". The agreement was entered into by and between the county of San Bernardino and the cities of Chino, Colton, Fontana, Loma Linda, Montclair, Ontario, Redlands, Rialto, San Bernardino and Upland. The joint powers agreement was the most efficient way to provide a public transit system to serve all parties. Certain transit service authorities were serving sub-areas of the county and it was decided that the transit needs of the entire county could better be served by creating a single umbrella agency. The agency could coordinate the efforts of the sub-areas and provide better transit service for all.

The governing board is made up of the major or council member from each member city and all five supervisors of the county. The city members could have an alternate, but the county members could not. Each member has one vote. However, upon the call of any board member a weighted voting shall be used which entitles each member agency to one additional vote for each $5,000 of capital asset value contributed to Omnitrans in the name of the member agency.

The Board of Directors perform the following functions:

1. Adopt the budget.

2. Appoint a general manager
3. Appoint a technical committee
4. Establish policy, including but not limited to:
    (a) uniform fares
    (b) marketing
    (c) user information
5. Adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of business
6. Perform such other functions as are required to accomplish the purpose of the agreement.[10]

The Omnitrans agreement allows each jurisdiction to determine the service characteristics for their area such as: Hours of operation, frequency and areas or routes to be served. Service may also be provided to points outside the jurisdictional limits of Omnitrans if requested. The extended service will be billed accordingly to the parties making the request.

The formation of Omnitrans is an example of a needed service that can be provided on a regional basis. The agreement allows each jurisdiction to a certain extent to decide its own level of service and, at the same time, have input into the overall operation through the voting power of its board member. Transportation is one area that lends itself to regional service. The transit needs of the region are being met much better and at a cost savings to the user.

CONSOLIDATION

"Consolidation of city and county governments in California, impossible to achieve in the past through the electoral process, may gain new support in the future as the result of current tax limitation policies. Consolidation refers to the merging of two or more local governments to form one governing unit. As a movement in the United States, consolidation of governments has had a limited record of success, but is taking place in fairly larger number in recent years, especially in the South."[11]

The two principle types of consolidation are functional and political. The functional type of consolidation involves contracts, mutual pacts or interlocal agreements between local governments calling for the exchange of services (as discussed above.) This type of consolidation does not change the form of existing government. On the other hand, political consolidation occurs with the actual merging of two or more local entities and this obviously can be controversial and difficult to achieve.

Many advantages can be identified to justify political consolidation; a large governmental unit can provide services more uniformly over a vast geographic area than is possible with small fragmented units; it can attract more professional employees and can better plan for the future. However, there also are disadvantages, mainly in people's distrust of big government, their fear of raises in taxes, and the disruption in their "establish-

ed orientation toward local government institutions and symbols."[12] At times, consolidation can cause realignment of political power among influential private interest groups and changes in public employee work loads, all of which may affect the support of these groups for consolidation. Since people frequently develop an identification with a specific community which transcends their feelings toward neighboring areas they may perceive a loss of this identification if their city or town is merged with a larger unit such as the county.

Another important factor is that the need for expanded services in outlying areas is not seen alike by all people as being of equal importance. Persons who benefit from the existing government structure have learned to accommodate themselves to the status quo and are reluctant to vote for change unless they experience deep dissatisfaction with their current services and can be shown that direct benefits will result from the proposed change.[13]

Any consolidation that will change the political makeup of an area is going to be met with opposition by some factions. Consolidation can mean the elimination of special district boards of directors which are used by some would-be politicians as stepping stones to elected offices.

Special district boards may operate from a hidden agenda and not in the best interest of the taxpaying citizen who has little or no input into the system.

Kent Mathenson, President of Metropolitan Funds, Inc., expressed these same concerns in an address to the 53rd annual conference of the International City Manager's Association:[14]

> "One possibility that concerns me greatly is that some councils of government could actually become devices for avoiding interjurisdictional action. The fact that elected officials come together to discuss problems does not mean that they necessarily have to decide to take joint action even when joint action would clearly be the best route to improve public services.
>
> The very opposite could be true. Conceivably, a number of local officials who want to avoid anything except localized and independent action by individual units could be most effective in doing just that as members of a council of governments. They could talk to death any proposal for cooperative activity. They could raise any number of fanciful objections. They could persist in disagreeing on the definitions of a problem or the best alternative toward a solution or the role of each of the local units of government involved. They could simply keep specific matters off the agenda or, failing that, from every being reconciled.
>
> The really disturbing aspect of this sort of a "status quo" council is that its very existence prevents other organizations from applying the regional approach which it, ostensibly, had been created to provide. In a region where a council of governments has been established no other agency can hold itself out as being responsible for, and authorized to deal with, such area-wide concerns as pollution and traffic, and land use and transportation. A council of governments co-opts these matters, and if it does not deal with them no one else can. The recognition of councils by Federal agencies as the single agency representative of regional interests within an area itself makes it particularly difficult for any other organization to step in.
>
> A second possibility that concerns me is that some councils of government evidence very little understanding of the need to involve the "grass roots" citizen in their planning and deliberations.

> One criticism of special authorities over the years has been that they are neither responsive nor responsible to the people. They function much as their directors want them to function, and Mr. John Citizen has no means of expressing his views or his needs or displeasure. He is burdened, in one form or another, with the cost of operating the authority, and he is governed, in one way or another, by policies and procedures of the authority. But, he has virtually no voice in what the authority does."

CONCLUSION

Regionalized public service is becomming a more viable concept as public agencies experience a budget crunch. The fact that today's citizens normally do not live, work, shop and play within a single jurisdiction promotes the idea of regionalization. The disadvantages and fears of city fathers losing home control are concerns that must be dealt with if regionalization has any chance. It would appear that as budget constraints become stronger, some form of regionalization will become more attractive.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER II

[1]National Service to Regional Councils, Regionalism: A New Dimension in Local Government and Intergovernmental Relations (Washington D.C.: National Service to Regional Councils, 1970), p. 1.

[2]Ibid. p. 1.

[3]Guillermo Arbona and Annette B. Ramirez De Arellano, Regionalization of Health Services, The Puerto Rican Experience. (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. vii.

[4]California, San Francisco Bay Conversation and Development Commission, 1979 Annual Report. (1979) p. 3.

[5]National Service to Regional Councils, Regionalism, p. 2.

[6]City of San Bernardino and the County of San Bernardino: Health Services Agreement, 1969.

[7]Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Alternative Approaches to Governmental Reorganization Metropoltan Areas, Washington. (1962) pp. 26-28.

[8]Jack Linville, "Cities and Counties Can Cooperate," Nations Cities, October 1973, p. 41.

[9]Ibid. p. 42.

[10]Omnitrans Authority, Joint Powers Agreement Between The County of San Bernardino and the Cities of Chino, Colton, Fontana, Loma Linda, Montclair, Ontario, Redlands, Rialto, San Bernardino, and Upland. (1976) p. 6.

[11]Rosaline Levenson, "City-County Consolidation in California: A Reexamination. Critique: Southern California Public Policy and Administration. Vol. V, No. 1 (Winter 1981): p. 28.

[12]Walter A. Rosenbaum and Gladys M. Krammerer, Against Long Odds: The Theory and Practice of Successful Government Consolidation. (Administrative and Policy Studies Series, No. 03-022, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, California, (1974) p. 12.

[13]Rosaline Levenson, "City-County Consolidation in California: A Reexamination" p. 30.

[14]Kent Mathewson, "Councils of Government Programs In Urban Development". Paper presented at the 53rd Annual Conference of the International City Manager's Association, New Orleans. (1967) pp. 8-10 (mimeographed).

Chapter III

FUNCTIONAL CONSOLIDATION IN THE FIRE SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

One very important area in which government entities can work together is fire protection. Fire certainly does not recognize political boundaries. Fire can spread from one jurisdiction to another very quickly. Therefore, it is to the benefit of all fire protection agencies to assist each other. It has been the author's experience that virtually any major fire requires many fire agencies to control it.

As Fire Chief of San Bernardino City, the author has been involved in numerous fire incidents requiring the coordination of several or many government and private agencies. A recent graphic example of this was the Panorama fire, which occured in November of 1980. This destructive fire started in the San Bernardino National Forest and quickly spread into the city of San Bernardino and also into the mountain community of Crestline which receives its fire protection from the California Department of Forestry. Immediately three separate fire agencies were involved. Ultimately, help from over 200 fire agencies was required to contain and extinguish this fire.

The assistance that fire protection agencies offer

each other during emergencies is termed "mutual aid". Another form of assistance is "joint response" where fire agencies send units to other jurisdictions automatically on the initial response. The emergency assistance has led to sharing of resources in non-emergency situations. The author feels that the assistance climate in which fire administrations work can very likely lead to intra-city mergers, joint purchasing and joint planning for fire protection. The concepts above are forms of functional consolidation.

MUTUAL AID

The help requested during the Panorama fire by the three entities is termed "mutual aid" by fire agencies. All fire departments in the state of California are signatory to a master mutual aid plan. This plan was devised because it was recognized that no community has resources to cope with any and all emergencies for which potential exists. Also, fire and rescue officials must pre-plan emergency operations to insure efficient utilization of available resources. The plan states in part:[1]

1. Basic to California's emergency planning is a statewide system of mutual aid in which local jurisdiction relies first on its own resources.

2. The California and Civil Defense Master Mutual Aid Agreement between the state of California, each of its 58 counties, and those incorporated cities and fire protection districts signatory thereto and which:

    a. creates formal structure for provision of mutual aid;

b. provides that no party shall be required to unreasonably deplete its own resources in furnishing mutual aid;
c. provides that the responsible local official in whose jurisdiction an incident requiring mutual aid has occured shall remain in charge at such incident, including the direction of such personnel and equipment provided through mutual aid plans pursuant to the agreement;
d. county-wide and local mutual aid operational plans shall be developed by the parties thereto in accordance with the provisions of such operational plans;
e. the mutual aid extended under this agreement and the operational plans adopted pursuant thereto shall be without reimbursement unless otherwise expressly provided for by the parties to this agreement.

The plan provides for a systematic mobilization, organization and operation of fire and rescue resources of the state and its political subdivisions in mitigating the effects of disaster. The plan also provides for a comprehensive and compatible method for the expedient mobilization and response of available resources on a local area, regional and statewide basis.

In this manner the fire service agencies in the state have regionalized fire protection during the time of the incident. The multiple agencies come together as one agency with a single command structure. The equipment and personnel of each department is totally committed until released.

JOINT RESPONSE

Annexation of county area by cities has been on the increase in California for some time. Piecemeal annexations

have caused wandering boundary lines between the cities and counties with county islands totally within a city a common occurance. When the boundaries are not straight, it causes problems for all public service providers, but more so for a fire department because of the emergency nature of its service. The fire or medical aid must receive immediate response. Valuable time is lost deciding in which jurisdiction the emergency is located.

One method used to overcome this problem is to provide a station funded by both agencies that responds to a given area regardless of jurisdiction. The county of Ventura and the city of Oxnard entered into such an agreement. When the area known as Channel Islands Harbor began to develop, the city of Oxnard approached Ventura county on providing one-third of the three person engine company to be located in the vicinity. In lieu of providing one fire fighter on duty daily, it was agreed that the county would pay to the city an annual amount of two-thirds of the fire taxes of the structures within the area. This amounted to about $60,000 annually in the mid 1970's.[2]

The agreement stated that:

1. The city will provide an engine company station complete with apparatus and manpower levels similar to other fire facilities of the city.

2. The city will utilize the station to provide initial fire suppression and rescue services to both the city and certain county jurisdictional areas.

3. The city will make the station available for emergency services to be utilized pursuant to both automatic aid and mutual aid agreements in existance between the two agencies.

4. The county will provide the following services to the county jurisdictional area:

   a. respond a second-in or follow-up engine company as indicated in dispatch procedures, and additional assistance as requested;
   b. provide station coverage as requested in the event that the joint station is not available for immediate response within the district;
   c. provide fire protection services, including fire cause investigation;
   d. provide a home fire safety program;
   e. provide a weed abatement program;
   f. participate in hydrant rental agreements with water purveyors.

The agreement was written to last five years with a clause that either party could terminate on July 1st with 60 days notice.[3]

RESOURCE SHARING

There is increasing acceptance by some fire administrators to consolidate public and private enterprise to provide a higher level of fire protection. The insurance industry is very much concerned and involved in fire protection. Currently both the insurance industry and fire departments expend resources on inspection of properties--one agency for the purpose of rate-making--one for the purpose of reducing fire hazards. It has been suggested that consolidating these inspections could; reduce insurance industry costs; provide a source of revenue to the fire department; and develop an incentive for homeowners to eliminate fire hazards by providing a

discount on their insurance premium.

This concept is based on the theory that an occupancy that has had a fire inspection will have less fires and losses. "Inspections produce three types of benefits: (1) reduction of the rate of fires; (2) reduction of the rate of deaths and injury; (3) reduction of extent of fire spread, loss and the time to control the fire".[4]

"Following the great fire of London, in 1666, insurance companies discovered that the surest way to control fires in the homes of a policy holder was to do it themselves. As a result, insurance companies were behind the creation of the first fire brigades, the foundation for today's fire department."[5]

The current practice requires that a representative of the insurance industry inspect commercial properties to determine the insurance rate. The representative looks at building construction, exposures and a number a other areas and a rate is set. The fire code establishes that most commercial occupancies receive an inspection from the fire department at least once each year. The objective of these inspections, as a general rule, is to remove possible ignition sources and to reduce the spread (and loss) of fire, should that occur.[6]

It seems logical that the fire department and the insurance industry could share the results of the inspections. The fire services and the insurance industry could work together to utilize (and train as necessary)

fire department forces, where there is mutual agreement to provide inspection services of commerical occupancies and homes for the insurance industry. The fire departments would be reimbursed for this inspection service.

This program would also provide a closer working relationship between the fire service and the insurance industry. "There is a feeling among some fire service people that the economic incentive for fire loss reduction lies within the insurance industry, not with local government. Somehow, if we are to realize the goal of reducing loss of life and property it will be necessary to bring the fire insurance industry and the fire protection service close together."[7]

Bryon Chaney, Fire Chief of Palm Springs, California, is currently working with several insurance companies on the prospect of joint inspections. He expects some results in the near future.[8]

One method of resource sharing is for fire protection agencies to join together for certain phases of their operation. The fire departments in East San Bernardino Valley have formed a group to assist each other. CONFIRE is a acronym for the Consolidated Fire Agencies of East San Bernardino Valley. The member agencies are Central Valley Fire District, California Department of Forestry, Colton Fire Department, Loma Linda Public Safety Division, Norton Air Base Fire Department, Redlands Fire Department, Rialto Fire Department, San Bernardino City

Fire Department and the San Bernardino National Forest.

The department chiefs of the CONFIRE group hold monthly meetings to discuss mutual problems and to attempt to find methods of providing improved fire protection to the citizens of the region.

Joint use of equipment is one method that CONFIRE found to be most beneficial to all the agencies. An agreement was entered into in 1979 to jointly purchase and use a mobile high pressure air compressor. This vehicle is used at the scene of a major emergency to refill breathing apparatus bottles. It also is sent to each department each week to refill the air cascade systems used in day to day operations.

This type of vehicle is very valuable in fire protection but is costly for one department to purchase and maintain. The agreement calls for the maintenance on the air truck to be shared by a pre-determined formula. The formula is based on the number of fire responses by each agency for the previous two years.[9]

The CONFIRE agencies all have joint response agreements with those agencies that have coterminous boundaries. Joint response agreements permit fire apparatus to automatically respond to a pre-determined area in another jurisdiction. This allows the nearest fire equipment to be sent to the emergency regardless of jurisdiction. The automatic aid agreement in East San Bernardino Valley

allows the fire protection agencies to ignore the political boundaries until the emergency is resolved.

As indicated above, the CONFIRE chiefs meet monthly. Two sub-groups have also been formed, the CONFIRE training officers and communications officers. The training officers plan and carry out quarterly joint drills involving personnel from all the agencies. The communications officers coordinate communications between the several dispatch centers. This facilitates the automatic responses.

The 1981 chairman of CONFIRE, Central Valley Fire Chief Duane Mellinger stated in an interview:[10]

> "CONFIRE is a step toward a total regionalized fire department in this area. It is a benefit to all the citizens of this area. It certainly is a progressive step from several years ago when fire departments would hesitate to respond outside their own city limits."

INTRACITY DEPARTMENT MERGER

Another type of consolidation that has merit is merging one or more departments within a city. The city of Rialto is a general law city and provides all the traditional city services including police, fire, planning, community services (water, sewer, streets), parks and recreation, finance, treasuer, and city clerk. As the belt began to tighten on the economy (in 1977) and even before the emergence of revenue restrictive Proposition 13, the city administration has begun to look for more economical ways to deliver the existing services. At that time each department operated independently with few joint activities

or resource sharing.

One savings the city made was to contract out its fire dispatching. The fire department had conducted its own dispatching at a cost in excess of $60,000/per year. It was determined that contracting dispatching with another governmental agency--San Bernardino County Communciations Department would be cost effective. The County Communications Center had already merged several county dispatch functions into one center. It was also contracting with other cities for fire dispatch service.

The director of building and safety for the city of Railto had retired in 1978 and the question of consolidation with the fire department was discussed. It was determined that a possible consolidation could reduce redundancy, minimize bureaucracy and maximize available resources. An experimental trial period was established with the objective of improved coordination of inspection activities.[11]

It was determined that the consolidation would consist of placing the two departments, fire and building and safety, under one administrative head. This appeared to be the most palatable merger based upon the political environment and employee atmosphere. The primary concern on the part of the employees was that no one would lose their job. The total merger was explained to the employees and they accepted it. The economic crunch currently being felt by most cities made the merger very feasible

to the elected officials. The senior building inspector was elevated to "Building Section Chief" and reported directly to the Fire Chief on division matters. The fire prevention section was administrated by the Fire Marshal holding the rank of Battalion Chief who reported to the Fire Chief on division matters relating to fire prevention. A long range goal is to combine the Building Section Chief and Marshal into one position.

Fire Chief Roger Purdie feels the merger is a success as he states in the summary of his paper:[13]

> "The merger experiment was completed in June, 1979 with satisfactory results. Not all the goals were reached; however, a significant reduction in confusion and an improved level of activity coordination was developed. The cooperation of existing personnel in both affected departments was critical for a smooth merger and was a mjor factor in the success of the concept.
>
> The break from tradition with this type of consolidation may not work in other communities because of the key factors outlined that were present in our case; however, it could serve as an example of what can be accomplished when government is willing to experiment and risk in order to better serve the public."

CONCLUSION

There appear to be many areas of functional consolidation that are feasible for fire protection agencies. Mutual Aid and Joint Response are splendid methods of providing assistance for emergency situations on a temporary basis.

Resource sharing such as joint inspections between fire agencies and insurance companies could prove to be

beneficial to both organizations.

Resource sharing of the type being practiced by the CONFIRE group is actually the first stage of consolidation albeit it is still functional consolidation. The joint purchasing, joint response and joint drills have proven to be very effective for the CONFIRE departments.

The merger of departments within a city is another method of consolidating similar services. Rialto City has shown that a merger of this type can be effective in both saving money and providing a higher level of service.

Functional consolidation is a tool many fire administrators are now using and this should increase in the future. However, in some cases it is a matter of overcoming traditional beliefs to achieve consolidation of agencies heretofore not considered possible.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER III

[1]California, Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Plan (1978), p. 2.

[2]Interview with Fire Chief, S. E. Masson, Ventura County. Camarillo, California, 8 December 1980.

[3]Ventura County, City of Oxnard, Agreement Fire Services, (1976), pp. 1-3.

[4]John R. Hall, Jr., Measuring the Effectiveness of Fire Inspections (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, April 1976), p. V.

[5]David A. Lucht, "Fire Service and The Insurance Industry," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Ohio Insurance Institute. Columbus, Ohio, 11 December 1975.

[6]Byron R. Chaney, "A Report on the Suggested Consolidation of the Insurance Rate Making and Fire Prevention Inspections," A Research Project for the National Fire Academy, Emmitsburg, Maryland, 26 June 1981. p. 4.

[7]Ibid. p. 7.

[8]Interview with Fire Chief Byron Chaney, City of Palm Springs, California, 15 March 1982.

[9]San Bernardino City, Air Truck - Joint Use by Fire Departments. (1979), p. 5.

[10]Interview with Fire Chief Duane Mellinger, Central Valley Fire District, San Bernardino, California, 16 November 1981.

[11]Roger K. Prudie, "A Break With Tradition" (A Report On Consolidation of the Building and Safety Department with the Rialto Fire Department, 1980) p. 2.

[12]Ibid. p. 5.

[13]Interview with Fire Chief Roger K. Purdie, City of Rialto, Rialto, California, 11 March 1981.

Chapter IV

REGIONAL CONSOLIDATION FOR FIRE PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION

The regional consolidation concept for fire protection has been researched and discussed for many years. In 1966 the Wingspread Conference report stated:[1]

> "Many independent fire department jurisdictions find themselves unable to cope with the financial burden of providing fire protection as a service. The economic stresses and strains become very pronounced as increased demands for other government services occur."

The above statement certainly applies today as much, or more, as it did in 1966.

Almost all fire departments today are experiencing some form of budgetary constraint or actual reduction in the level of service capability. Faced with the reality of reduced funding, alternate methods and approaches for delivering adequate fire protection is paramount in plans of the fire administrators.

ALTERNATE METHODS

Many individual towns, communities and cities have joined together in different arrangements to provide improved levels of fire service delivery. These arrangements range from contractual on call mutual aid to fully consolidated fire districts or regions. Between these poles are various arrangements which include automatic

aid response, central purchasing and cooperative fire station locations.

The ultimate answer, in most cases, for lower cost fire protection and/or increased level of service is total consolidation. However, it may not be politically feaseable. Some communities simply do not want to give up home rule.

Proposition 13 was passed in California in 1978. The new law changed the property tax structure and severly limited the revenue available to fire departments. A statewide committee was formed to study the problem of providing fire protection now that the basic funding source for fire service has been drastically cut. The committee was made up of representatives from all facets of the fire service in California. The committee studied many different methods of solving the problems facing them, including:[2]

Ad valorem taxes
Demand charges and fees for service
State funding measures
Reductions in level of service
Functional consolidation
Regionalization

CONSOLIDATION

The Proposition 13 workshop steering committee recognized the problems with regionalization. The following is the committee's statement on this issue:[3]

"As you well imagine, this sensitive topic was approached with all the suspicions and prejudices

that could be expected. However, a productive discussion hinged on adopting a positive and open attitude. Departmental consolidation is one possible solution. Like it or not, after funding it may be the number one issue facing the fire service in the 1980s."

The workshop looked at both the pro and con arguments for regionalization:[4]

Pros: The main argument offered for merging of several fire departments is the potential for savings in administration, personnel, equipment, and operating costs.

Some savings in support services costs at the county level can be expected as a result of consolidating a number of fire departments in the county.

A consolidated department will make it easier for the public to keep up with where the tax dollars are going, and who provides what services when.

Improved resource utilization and distribution.

Improved operations through standardization. Improved employee opportunity for promotion and transfer may held maintain a high level of productivity and morale.

Reduction in overall fire protection costs.

Improved responsibility and accountability with a single administration.

Cons: Some may view consolidation as a loss of local accountability.

Some citizens and fire service administrators may resent the loss of autonomy.

Economics of scale. Size doesn't guarantee efficiency. Regionalization can be expected to produce economics only to a certain point. After that the rate of return diminishes.

Labor relations: Concerns about staffing and benefits can doom fair consideration

of regionalization before serious planning can start.

Political concerns can override all other considerations in favor of consolidation.

The problem of working out equitable resource contributions.

The major stumbling block to consolidation, in this author's opinion, is loss of local autonomy. Most small cities or communities do not want to lose their identity. It is felt they will simply become part of the bigger organization and have little voice in their fire protection.

An informal study was conducted in 1978 by the local fire chiefs on the possibility of consolidation. (This occured while the author was Deputy Chief of the San Bernardino City Fire Department and privy to the information.) The report came back from the various city managers through the chiefs and it indicated negative response to the concept. In fact, one city manager instructed his chief to cease even discussing the matter at future meetings. The chiefs attributed their managers' feelings in part to a fear of loss of home rule.

EXAMPLES OF CONSOLIDATION EFFORTS

South County Fire Protection District

The South County Fire Protection District is the consolidation of Belmont, California Fire Protection District and the city of San Carlos Fire Department of California.

The Belmont Fire Protection District served the city of Belmont and a small portion of unincorporated area of San Mateo County. The Belmont city council served also as the board of the fire district. The two cities have coterminous boundaries with comparable social/economic characteristics and topography.

The city and the fire district created a joint powers authority under section 6500 of the California Government code. Both agencies took existing staff and facilities and consolidated them into one fire authority. This included suppression, prevention and administrative activities. The fire chief is supervised by a management committee consisting of the City Manager of both communities. General administrative support such as finance, personnel, equipment maintenance and communications are provided by the two cities. The authority is governed by a four person board made up of two council members from each city. The benefits of the consolidation are:

Operational:

> There are now four engine companies, one aerial ladder truck company and a rescue truck for fire suppression vs. four engine companies before. The new fire prevention bureau has one fire marshal and three civilian inspectors vs. two fire marshals and one inspector before. One chief's position was eliminated and the total staffing was reduced to 68 from 75 with an added emphasis toward fire prevention.

Economic:

> The South County fire budget for fiscal year 79/80 indicated a savings of $500,000 over the combined budgets of the two fire departments prior to the

overall cost. The major savings came from reduced administrative staff which was used to augment the patrol staff. There was savings in vehicles and other equipment. The Corte Madera town council also utilized the savings to strengthen the fire department which was badly needed. The council felt that the net result of this approach would be an overall stronger public safety posture still coupled with financial savings.

It was decided that the Twin Cities Police Authority would be governed by a four-member council with two members from Corte Madera and two members from Larkspur. This raised the inevitable question of what happens if there is a disagreement. It was the feeling that the twin cities council would be far more effective if it must reach a compromise rather than have an uneven voting structure or some form of binding arbitration. Once again if the parties believe in the concept it is felt that they will find necessary compromises in the interest of furthering this concept. The administration of the department is fixed with the two town managers.

Mr. Douglas R. Dawson, Town Manager for Corte Madera stated that it was his belief that "at this time the consolidation will provide both communities with better and broader police service at an overall reduced cost without sacrificing local control and responsiveness to individual community needs."[6]

Western Wayne Fire District

Six cities in the south eastern section of the state of Michigan are currently studying the feasibility of consolidating into one fire department. The cities of Eloise, Inkster, Romulus, Taylor, Wayne and Westland jointly decided to explore the possibility of providing the same level of fire protection at less cost or better protection at the same cost. The contiguous area is 76 square miles and the combined population is 256,300.

"Rising costs for all six communities required that a method of cost containment for fire portection services be developed or face drastic reductions in the level of fire protection service."[7]

An evaluation of fire protection needs indicated to the cities that full regional consolidation of fire protection services holds the greatest promise of a solution. A feasibility study was made to evaluate the present efficiency and cost of fire protection services in the six communities. It covered the impact of operating as a single department. It also examined the organizational structure changes required to operate effectively as a consolidated region. Other studies covering alarms per capita, runs per company, companies per capita, companies per square mile, manning and total cost per capita have shown that regionalization produces its maximum benefits when applied to areas with population over 100,000.[8]

The conclusion reached is that regionalization of the fire protection services in the six communities is both necessary and desirable. Consolidation will result in improved efficiency and cost containment for all six communities. It is recommended that the six communities form a "Western Wayne Fire District". The proposed consolidation would result in the closing of three fire stations with no reduction of effectiveness. The equipment from these stations would be reallocated to more strategic locations. Equipment no longer needed would be sold.

The reduction in fire fighters would be handled by attrition during the first year of operation. Increased use of paid on-call fire fighters would augment the on-duty forces. The projected savings are:[9]

Close three stations.....	$ 30,000
Sale of two stations.....	$400,000
(one station to be used for fire prevention headquarters)	
Reduction of 10 fire fighters.	$400,000
Sale of five pumpers.....	$ 25,000
Total savings first year	$855,000

CONCLUSION

Total consolidation of a fire (or police) department can be feasible and desirable in many instances. For a consolidation to be successful the city and/or county administration must be willing to give up complete local autonomy. In return it should increase effectiveness and reduce costs. The consolidation concept must be sold to the public as well as to the employees involved.

ENDNOTES CHAPTER IV

[1]The Johnson Foundation, Wingspread Conference on Fire Administration Education and Reserach: Statements of National Significance to the Problems in the U.S. (Racine: The Johnson Foundation, 1966) p. 41.

[2]California Fire Services Post Proposition 13 Workshop Report, by R. G. Barrows, Chairman (Sacramento: California Fire Chiefs Association, 1979) p. 3.

[3]Ibid. p. 41.

[4]Ibid. p. 42.

[5]Interview with Warren H. Shafer, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director, San Carlos, California, 21 October 1980.

[6]Interview with Douglas R. Dawson, Town Manager, Corte Madera, California, 21 October 1980.

[7]Lawrence Eischen, Robert D. Larsen, Russell A. McAmee, Larry J. Picker, Theodore Scott, Robert Thue, Kenneth A. Warfield, "Regional Fire Consoldiation Application and Effectiveness" A Research Project for the National Fire Academy, Emmitsburg, Maryland, 5 June 1981, p. 8.

[8]J. W. Ballatine, M. P. Jurkat and F. W. Cleveland, Efficiency Measure and Fire Department Management, (hoboken, N. J., 1976) p. 1.

[9]Eischen et. al, "Regional Fire Consolidation Application and Effectiveness" p. 9.

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Regionalized public service is not a new concept. President Kennedy, in his first message to Congress, urged local government to explore these possibilities. There are a variety of ways to achieve regional service: Takeover by county, state or federal agencies, establishment of a special district, transfer of responsibility to another agency, contracting with another entity and (probably the hardest to achieve) total consolidation. A logical approach is to establish regionalized service in those areas that have a linkage between the corresponding service area and the population.

There are many ramifications to any establishment of regional service. Items that must be considered are: Type of taxation and its equiality; political accountability; and the loss of home rule.

Regionalization involving natural resources appears to be the easiest to achieve. The San Francisco Bay could not be administered individually by all the jurisdictions involved. Therefore, the establishment of the San Francisco Bay Commission was the most realisitc approach for the bay communities to equitably manage the uses of the bay. Air quality management is such a nebulous commodity that it could never be handled by individual

communities. An Air Quality Management District was obviously necessary to insure that regional standards could be met. Normally these services are fairly easy to regionalize as they do not impact the average citizen on an individual basis as much as the more direct services such as fire, police or health.

The health and safety services are usually more difficult to consolidate because citizens do not want to give up home rule. The local government normally prefers to retain direct input into the level of service received from these agencies. Some communities enlist the aid of local citizens as police reserves and volunteer fire-fighters and regionalization can jeopardize these organizations. People may perceive a merger as a loss of neighborhood identification and fight to defeat it even though it may mean lower cost or improved service.

Contract agreements like the Lakewood Plan certainly give a small community a dimension in providing service without the problems involved with a full city service. Contracting also allows an entity to deal with seasonal problems without purchasing equipment and hiring personnel.

The Omnitrans Joint Powers Agreement is an efficient method to provide a public transit system for the San Bernardino Valley. A joint powers agreement gives all the participants involved a voice in the administration of the agreement.

As stated above, the author feels that the fire

service is a front runner in providing regional service. Mutual aid, (assistance to other departments during emergency operations) has been active in California for a number of years. To control a major fire, the resources from many agencies must be brought together under one command.

Numerous fire departments with coterminous boundaries are now entering into joint response or automatic aid agreements. The goal of progressive departments of today is to respond with the closest fire equipment to a fire regardless of jurisdiction. Many fire departments are participating in joint purchasing to achieve cost savings available in mass purchases. These items range from safety gloves to fire engines. Innovative ideas such as consolidated inspections by insurance companies and fire departments are being explored.

The merging of departments within a city can reduce cost and improve service as demonstrated by the city of Rialto. The merger of the Rialto Building and Safety and Fire Departments reduced personnel and allowed builders to deal with one agency instead of two. Sharing of resources and functional consolidation are concepts that are being studied by various fire departments. These are methods of improving effectiveness and/or reducing costs without the trauma of total consolidation.

This author has observed from personal experience the benefits realized with the organization of CONFIRE

in the East San Bernardino Valley. It has allowed the member departments to provide a higher level of service without being absorbed into one large entity and losing individual identity.

It must be recognized that personalities play a large part in how well functional consolidation will succeed. If the leaders of the departments involved feel threatened they may create roadblocks to consolidation.

Regional consolidation is a very drastic step for any type of public service. The examples shown in the text indicate that it is feasible in certain cases. The timing is most important and the idea must be sold to those affected. The feeling of maintaining home rule especially for fire or police departments is very emotional. The public must understand that it will continue to have input into the operation of the department. The post-Proposition 13 Workshop recognized that total consolidation is a sensitive issue but still felt that it was probably the number one issue facing the fire service in the 1980's.

In conclusion the author feels that regionalized public service is a viable concept that must be explored by progressive administrators. Every effort must be made to overcome the parochial attitude of the past. In many instances regionalized public service is in place and working. In today's economy there is need for much more. All cities and communities must accept the challenge

of determining the best methods of providing effective service at the most economical cost. Consideration must be given to whether a higher level of service can best be achieved by total consolidation or any of the other types of functional consolidation.

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