

Who's Afraid Of The 'Regionalism' Wolf?

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is condensed from *Regionalism*, a publication of Metropolitan Farm, Inc., a research and education foundation, and reprinted with permission.

The six counties of southeast Michigan have many problems which are regional in scale and must be solved at the regional level. There is great economic and social interdependence of citizens within the six counties upon each other and upon many communities in each individual's life. Many

citizens work toward the necessary decisions to pick the most appropriate alternatives for southeast Michigan. At the same time, there are citizens who are extreme in their opposition to the entire concept of regionalism.

In the process of their opposition, they have taken many liberties with truth, have dispensed distorted and twisted information, have created what they call "fact" where no such "fact" exists.

In an attempt to clear up the sorts of distortions, misinformation, half-truths and non-truths being spread by some people in southeast Michigan, this newsletter will categorically respond to the points being raised by the "more vocal" anti-regionalists.

Reality: To divide responsibilities among appropriate levels of government is not really creating anything new or additional, and certainly not creating more government, as inferred.

When the original colonies and states of this nation formed the United States of America, they formed that federal government to handle certain problems which were more logically to be handled by a larger level of government, problems which they could not handle as individual local governments...national defense, a monetary and currency system, a postal system, etc.

When states created, under the "home rule" concept, our cities, townships, and villages, school districts and counties, they did so in order that certain problems which were very local could be handled by the most appropriate level of local government.

Now we have problems which are regional in scale. In the best traditions of this nation's ability to respond to new dimensions of problems, the assigning of certain responsibilities to a regional agency, for dealing directly with regional problems, is not inconsistent in southeast Michigan.

Reality: In the first place, "metropolitan government" is an extreme version of regional problem solving which some political scientists have talked about in the past. Under the concept of "metropolitan government," local government would be eliminated in favor of one, large single government.

Almost no one involved with the regional movement argues that such a system would be either desirable or feasible in southeast Michigan, or any other metropolitan area in this country. The attempt to make "metropolitan government" mean the same thing as regionalism is a typical propagandist ploy.

Reality: Again, the attempt to make "metropolitan government" synonymous with any regional problem solving process is badly distorting the circumstance. Eliminating any local government, including Detroit,

is not a logical way to deal with regional problems. Every local government, including Detroit, has its own local elected officials. A regional agency which could take responsibility for specific and certain regional problems would, in fact, strengthen local government by allowing local governments to devote their full energy and resources to the providing of local services.

They say: "Regionalism is just a way to save the City of Detroit at the expense of the suburbs."

Reality: Nowhere in history can one find a good example of the survival of the central city died. The central city provides the heart of a region, and the region can no more survive without its heart than can the human body.

Regionalism is a concept which embraces the interdependence of all citizens in the southeast Michigan region upon each other and the interdependence of all communities in southeast Michigan upon each other.

It is absurd to believe that suburbanites may turn their backs on the City of Detroit and literally let it die without paying tremendous costs as a result.

More than 220,000 suburbanites turn their living daily in the city, hundreds of thousands of suburbanites travel into the city for cultural and recreational experience...110 suburban school districts send busloads of children to the Art Institute and Historical Museum last year...

Many thousands of suburban citizens receive vital health care in the medical facilities located within the City of Detroit, and will continue to do so in an even more important way as the giant medical center complex is completed in downtown Detroit.

Regionalism is an attempt to define those services and facilities which are regional in scale and whose cost and support should be spread throughout the region, and not borne by any one community at the expense of other communities.

They say: "Planned communities and new towns are part of a conspiracy with state and federal government to move poor and black families into suburban communities."

Reality: A look at the real estate section of newspapers will show that there are more than two dozen "planned communities" developing in southeast Michigan.

Only a couple of those communities have made provisions for low-income housing in which poor people could live, either black or white.

There are many who believe that that is a weakness of these planned communities, that in fact, one appropriate answer to the housing problems of this region would be to make it possible for poor people, black or white, to live throughout the region, rather than being crammed into the central city of Detroit.

While many would consider the lack of such provision a weakness of those planned communities, it is obviously

absurd to accuse the developers of those planned communities of being part of a plot to do exactly what they are not doing.

They say: "SEMOOG is supposed to be a voluntary organization, yet when Macomb County decided not to join SEMOOG, it was cut off from all federal funding as a penalty for not belonging."

Reality: Despite the fact that Macomb County is not a member of SEMOOG, as many believe it should be, in the year 1972 SEMOOG reviewed positively 40 applications requesting \$388,842 for communities in Macomb County for federal funding and did not give any negative reviews to such applications.

They say: "We have nothing in common with the City of Detroit, so why should we and Macomb County be forced into a regional agency with Wayne County and the City of Detroit?"

Reality: In fact, 69,486 wage earners from Macomb

County travel into Detroit and Wayne County each day to earn a living. That represents 32.3 per cent of the wage earners of Macomb County.

Those 69,486 citizens of Macomb County would apparently disagree with their

county officials that they have nothing in common with Detroit and Wayne County. Communities in Macomb County have worked hard to attract business and industry to their cities and townships for the resulting tax revenues.

Custodians Voting On Pact

Custodians for the Clarenceville School District are engaged in a ratification vote on a proposed new contract with a decision expected next week.

Terms call for a wage increase "approximately the same" as the 5.2 per cent bus drivers.

hike agreed to earlier by the district's secretaries, a school spokesman said. The secretarial increase was 20 cents an hour, he said.

Negotiations continue with the district's teachers and bus drivers.

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1405 North Woodward, Royal Oak
28405 Greenfield, Southfield
25123 Southfield, Southfield
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2699 West Big Beaver Road, Troy
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25712 Grand River near Beech Road
14221 Greenfield near Grand River
10841 Joy Road at Manor
24224 Joy Road near Telegraph
16841 Schoeller Road near Michichals
17230 Farmington Road, Livonia
East
14628 East Jefferson at Manistique
16530 East Warren near Outer Drive
11511 Kelly Road at Whittier
25501 Harper, St. Clair Shores
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