

SEN. GILBERT BURSLEY: CITIES CHOKED BY OLD BOUNDARIES

Township officials who have made a practice of restating expansion of nearby cities have been in arms against a State Boundary Commission bill passed by the Michigan Senate.

Township opposition has been based largely on technical questions of preserving township voters' chance to veto any city expansion or new city proposals.

But the bill's real significance is (1) that the power to set elections on new city matters is taken away from county boards of supervisors, usually dominated by rural blocks outside of Wayne County, and given to a State Boundary Commission; (2) that the Boundary Commission would have to consider the sociological and engineering merits of a proposed new city; and (3) the Boundary Commission would have power to deny the election or amend the proposal if it didn't make sense.



"Cities Are Strangled..."

To people who think cities should have the right to grow without being strangled by the defensive incorporations of townships, that's radically good thinking. To people who think townships are sacred and city growth is wicked, that's radically bad.

One of the three sponsors of the Boundary Commission bill is State Sen. Gilbert Bursley, a liberal Republican from Ann Arbor.

A former State Department and United Nations official, Bursley is best known for bills on industrial growth and expansion of Michigan's share of international trade, but he is also interested in city growth, primarily because he sees city services as a vital ingredient in industrial expansion.

So we took a trip to his home and asked him about the mechanics and the implications of the proposed State Boundary Commission.

governor with approval of the Senate; in the event of a case within a given county, there would be two more members appointed from that county by the probate judge. So you'd have the governor and the judicial branch joining to give as much objectivity as possible to the decisions that might be made.

"The Boundary Commission, as we have planned it in the bill, would have power over two areas--incorporation of new cities and villages and consolidation of several units into a single new city.

"It is not an annexation bill. Some critics have said that 'this is an annexation bill.

"I would point out, truthfully, that good, well-planned, well-organized Boundary Commission with the power to provide for the incorporation and consolidation of cities and villages--if this is a working arrangement, probably changes and amendments could be made at future times to grant powers, so that it's possible the question of annexation could be considered in the future.

"But annexation is not something over which the Boundary Commission, under the present bill, would have any jurisdiction."

Orderly Growth

QUESTION: Senator, you are one of three sponsors of the State Boundary Commission legislation. What would the Boundary Commission do?

BURSLEY: "The State Boundary Commission would be a long hoped-for answer to orderly procedures for the growth of our metropolitan and urban communities and, at the same time, protect the surrounding township and rural areas.

"This would be done by having a Boundary Commission with three appointed state officials, named by the

signatures, and whether the legal description was accurate. How would the Boundary Commission be different?

BURSLEY: "My answer is: Look at the results achieved so far.

"I think it's a matter of fact and of record that many of our cities--smaller cities, too--have been unable to grow. They've been unable to get additional land upon which factories and plants, which create jobs, could be situated.

"The present procedure is too cumbersome--there are too many built-in oppositions--there's too much resistance among interested parties for it to be workable.

"There are very few cities that have been able to have a healthy growth, which has at the same time benefited the hinterland. Ann Arbor, I think, is an example of a city that has been able to grow.

"But there are many Michigan cities that are in a sense strangled by city limits boundaries that cannot be changed; the city is unable to provide services beyond that boundary; the township is unable to offer enough services to draw new industry, and the economy stagnates."

Q. & A.

"2. Approve the petition, and then put the question on the ballot for the electors residing in the area.

"3. Revise the boundary of the area proposed for incorporation and submit the question to the electors."

QUESTION: And what about the case of a petition for consolidation?

BURSLEY: "In that case, the proposal must be submitted to the electors of the municipalities--unless:

"1. The same municipalities were considered in a consolidation proposal during the preceding two years, or--

"2. An annexation proceeding is pending in any of the municipalities proposed for consolidation."

Its Guidelines

QUESTION: So the Boundary Commission has only very limited authority to deny a consolidation petition. They would have to put it on the ballot except for two minor cases.

Now, will the Boundary Commission have to follow any guidelines or take into consideration any factors before deciding on the logic of a petition for incorporation?

BURSLEY: "Yes. This, I think is extremely important. It's spelled right in the bill. The Boundary Commission must take into consideration:

"The general effect on the entire community.

"The relationship of the proposed action to any established local unit or regional land use plan, of which there are many.

"The factors they must give attention to are:

"Population density;

"The property's assessed valuation;

"The natural boundaries and drainage basins;

"Very importantly, the probable future urban growth, including both residential and business;

"The need for organized community services;

"The present cost and adequacy of governmental services;

"The probable future need for services;

Three Options

QUESTION: Let's suppose that the State Boundary Commission is presented a petition asking an election to incorporate a new city. What can the Boundary Commission do?

BURSLEY: "The Boundary Commission can:

"1. Deny the proposed incorporation.



...Not An Annexation Bill...

"The practicability of supplying such services to the proposed area.

"All of these factors must be considered by the Boundary Commission. We have not spelled out in the bill any statistical guidelines of population density or anything of that nature."

Big Departure

QUESTION: The mere fact that the Boundary Commission has to look at these factors is quite a departure from our existing system, isn't it?

BURSLEY: "Yes.

"In the case now of an incorporation petition before the County Board of Supervisors, I think the supervisors would consider many of these factors, but there has been no criteria offered to them."

QUESTION: Can the Boundary Commission initiate an incorporation proposal on its own? or a consolidation?

BURSLEY: "No. The Boundary Commission would receive petitions from local areas."



...Objection Is Removed"

Townships Object

QUESTION: The Michigan Townships Association has charged that the bill would deny citizens the right to vote on annexation. Is this the case, in your opinion?

BURSLEY: "No, it isn't.

"The specific charge they made in their letter is that citizens would be denied the right to vote on the structural change of government.

"There had been a provision in the bill, in the consolidation section, that called for an alternative procedure. In this, petitions signed by 15 per cent of the registered electors would be adequate to initiate a proposal so that you could then proceed with the electing of a charter commission. . . . A vote on whether to have the consolidation would not be necessary if you had the necessary 15 per cent of signatures.

"This, I think, was the point of objection. It was only an alternative procedure. In the bill, as it now stands--passed in the Senate and over in the House--this section has been stricken. The objection of the Townships Association on 'no chance to vote' is removed--there will have to

be a vote on any proposal and on any charter that is finally written."

Long Way Off

QUESTION: Let's assume the bill of which you are a co-sponsor is passed by the House in the October session and signed by the governor. How will it affect, once it becomes law, existing proposals for governmental boundary or structural changes? For example, would it have any effect on the proposal in Farmington Township on Oct. 23 to incorporate part of the township as a city, and would it have any effect on the Plymouth Township procedures toward becoming a city?

BURSLEY: "I don't think it would have any effect on either Farmington or Plymouth, certainly not in 1967.

"It's almost certain that this will not be one of the items considered in the special session of the Legislature in October.

"The bill would be before the House of Representatives in January, because under our new constitution the bills carry over from one year to the second.

"And the chances are that it would be a couple of months along in 1968 before they were passed, and it may have to come back to the Senate to concur in changes.

"And unless it had a two-thirds vote for immediate effect, it wouldn't become law until 90 days after the 1968 session had adjourned."



If your want ad is in this paper, people are reading it today!

Her lunchtime sandwich at the corner restaurant really hit the spot. Now she has a few minutes to linger over her coffee, and she spreads her copy of the Observer Want Ads on the counter. She will take a pencil from her handbag and mark certain ads to which she will respond after work.

The young working girl knows how helpful the Observer Want Ads can be. She may be seeking furnishings for her apartment, or a certain appliance, or even another apartment located more conveniently. Whatever her need, she likes the "department store" variety of offerings she will see on the Observer Want Ad pages.

If your ad is in the paper, she may be one of the many nice people who will contact you, because she is only one of thousands who will read the ad.

For efficient, friendly service in placing your ad, dial GA 2-0900. An experienced Ad-Visor will help you, and you will be surprised at the low cost.

Classified
WANT ADS
WEDNESDAY & SUNDAY