

CITIZENS LEAGUE COMMENTS ON METROPOLITAN

COUNCIL 1980 WORK PROGRAM AND BUDGET

Remarks made by Allan Boyce, CL President, September 13, 1979

GENERAL

1. The Citizens League sees a central role of the Council to involve activating the process of legislative decision making.

It is difficult for the legislature to take action to reorganize urban systems in the absence of a consensus from the region as to what is desired. It is the job of the Council to secure that consensus . . . no other entity can do this.

2. A work program for the Council should include objectives for the members themselves.

This could involve a special emphasis on understanding the problems of one major issue area, such as finance or transportation and the development of a legislative program to deal with the issues.

SPECIFIC TOPICS

1. Metropolitan finance.

The Council should work toward developing a metropolitan capital budget and a consolidated program of requests to the legislature for the financing of regional capital projects. These requests now come to the legislature in scattered, individual fashion. The Council should also work toward the development of a regional financing source for regional functions. The Citizens League has proposed the possible use of a regional sales tax which could replace or supplement existing regional property tax levies.

Underlying this proposal is the concept that the regional system of tax and finance is a system and that it should be planned for just as much as the regional airport system or the regional sewer system. The Council should be involved in planning the system of public revenue . . . identifying issues, discussing alternatives and making proposals to the legislature for action.

2. Health care costs.

The Citizens League has recommended that a regional goal be set for the per capita increase in health care costs each year. This would not be a binding limit, but a means of setting policy and monitoring what is happening. There is, of course, a major policy issue as to whether or not the region is willing to provide anything less than the maximum level of care which is technically possible.

3. Cable television.

Citizens League has urged that the Council play a lead role in developing the interconnection of local systems so that a program of specialized interests could be sent to all subscribers in the seven-county region. There is still a need for the Council to act in this area. Neither the State Cable Board, nor the individual municipalities are going to give top priority to regional interconnections.

4. Local government boundaries and functions.

Local government is a "system" just like any other. It can and does change. Some orderly planning and early thinking about the issues involved would be desirable. Difficult and controversial as it might be to look at alternate forms of government structure, this is the type of job which the Council is uniquely capable of undertaking.

The Citizens League believes that counties and municipalities are developing in such a way as to represent a dual level of local government. There is a serious question as to whether this is inevitable or appropriate. The legislature could act in this area, but needs proposals from the agency created to watch for problems developing within the Twin Cities area and to develop proposals for action.

5. Energy

The Citizens League has not done major research in this area, but it is obvious that as the state begins to call for a community energy policy, this ought to mean the metropolitan area.

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