



ARE CITIES OBSOLETE?

—D. Jordan Wilson (Pix).

By BERNARD WEISSBOURD

FROM 55,000,000 to 60,000,000 more people will be living in metropolitan areas in 1980 than were living there in 1960. How will we manage? Already our cities are decaying faster than they can be rebuilt. Parking is a universal problem. The tax base of the city is eroding as industry moves to the suburbs. A significant part of the white population is also moving to the suburbs, while the cores of our cities are filling with Negroes as the migration from the South steadily rises. The cost to the cities of trying to adjust the migrants to a new kind of existence imposes additional burdens upon the city's tax base.

Taxes are also rising in the suburbs to pay for the high cost of municipal services spread out over areas of low

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population density. Open space is being consumed at a terrifying rate, so that suburbs once in open country are now surrounded. Travel time to the city has multiplied as the expressways get clogged during rush hours.

Some experts do not find these problems of city decay and suburban sprawl unduly alarming. They maintain that the continuing dispersal that present trends indicate for the future is inevitable, and not necessarily undesirable. I believe the opposite.

Suburban sprawl and urban decay have not come about solely because people have made a free choice in a free enterprise market. That choice has been influenced by federal housing subsidies, which, purporting to be neutral, have in fact subsidized low-density middle-income living in the suburbs and have thereby financed the flight of white population from the city. Another factor affecting this dispersal has been our segregation practices within the city.

The lack of public discussion about the influence of housing segregation and federal housing subsidies upon urban growth patterns has been a barrier to understanding the problems of the city and suburbs and has created a feeling of hopelessness about the future of America's cities. It is my purpose here to show that it is possible to deal con-

structively with the problems of the metropolitan region if these important factors are not ignored.

Compared to the time span of Western civilization the modern urban complex, sometimes called megalopolis, is a new, young phenomenon. Some people are confident that a new technology of communication and transportation will solve many of the most intractable problems of the metropolitan region and that, in time, the region of the future will emerge. One author envisions "continuous low-density urban belts stretching from Maine to Virginia, from Toronto and Pittsburgh to Milwaukee, and from Amsterdam to Frankfurt and Mannheim. . . . However, there seems to be no reason why, properly organized and interlaced with greenbelts, freeways, natural reservations, and sites of historic interest, and accented vertically by occasional high-rise elements, these low-density urban regions of tomorrow should not be more livable and effective in satisfying the totality of human values than the transitional urban forms of today."

While no businessman whose offices must be located in the central business district, and no dweller in the city slums, can accept the decline of the city with equanimity, it is quite likely that if we do nothing to alter present trends the

low-density urban region will be the pattern of the future. The New York metropolitan region, for example, has grown outward along major transportation arteries. Its axis of growth extended five miles in 1900, twenty-five miles in 1960, and may become fifty miles by 1985.

Acceptance of low-density regional growth implies, of course, a curtailment of mass transportation, for mass transportation works well only in highly concentrated areas where trip origins and destinations are clustered rather than widely dispersed. Conversely, the automobile, which functions so efficiently for decentralized traffic, becomes highly inefficient under conditions of intense demand. Suburban sprawl will thus bring about a further decline in mass transportation, as increasing reliance on the automobile brings further congestion to central business districts.

Each new expressway not only undercuts the market for mass transportation but accelerates the movement of industry away from the central cities. The truck and the car have given the manufacturer new opportunities to select sites in outlying areas. The movement of industry from central city locations to outlying suburban locations has created a new phenomenon—out-commuting.

Nor have the results of the federal programs for slum clearance, urban renewal, and public housing so far given any reason to expect that the trend toward city decline and low-density regional settlement will be reversed. Slums in the cities are growing faster than we can clear them. We should not expect urban renewal to work so long as there is no place for persons evacuated from the slums to live. People displaced by urban renewal and by the new expressways have created new slums.

Moreover, no one is satisfied with public housing. By rejecting all those whose incomes exceeded the prescribed limits, public housing has developed a concentration of those members of society who are not able to support themselves. Coupled with the fact that most cities have followed a deliberate program of segregation in public housing, the result has been to create in many places an environment lacking in all the positive attributes of urban life. The second generation of many public housing occupants is now coming to maturity and it is already clear that many of them will never become viable, self-supporting members of society.

Urban renewal programs aimed at aiding the central business district show greater promise of long-range success, probably because there is considerable strength in the central business district to begin with. New office buildings in the central areas of each of the metropolitan regions demonstrate that finan-

cial and commercial institutions, public utilities, newspapers and magazines, and government, together with the lawyers, accountants, stockbrokers, and others involved in serving these institutions, require a centralized location. Thus, although a sizable number of people and industries has moved out of the central city, there has been far less movement of office activities to outlying areas than speculative reports would lead us to believe.

THE movement of white population to suburban areas and the concentration of Negro population in the central city will be intensified during the next fifteen years if present trends continue. Since the end of World War II the Negro population has been increasing even faster than the white population. Philip Hauser points out that the decline of the non-white death rate together with the increase in their birth rate has resulted in a rate of growth for non-whites 60 per cent higher than for whites. This great national rise is dwarfed by an even more explosive increase of non-whites in metropolitan areas. By 1990 about 2,500,000 Negroes are expected to be living in the Chicago metropolitan area, about 1,500,000 more than in 1960. The migration to the cities of rural Negroes and Southern whites and Puerto Ricans has already imposed heavy tax burdens on the city. In 1959, for example, New York City spent \$50,000,000 for remedial programs for its Puerto Rican newcomers, more than it spent on all its parks, libraries, zoos, and museums in that year. In its 1959-60 budget New York City assigned 23 per cent to public hospitalization, health, and welfare and 20 per cent to education. The great growth rate of the Negro population in New York, through continued migration as well as natural increase during the next fifteen years, will tend to increase even further the city's costs for welfare, health, and education.

The picture that emerges from these forecasts is far from salutary. Low-density regional settlements in which industry and the white populations spread out over the countryside without adequate mass transportation contrast with the concentrated Negro occupancy of the center city, whose tax base has diminished by the flight of industry and whose expenses have increased for the care of its immigrants. Moreover, a growing number of the center-city population will be commuting to jobs in the suburbs while many of the suburban whites will continue to travel to jobs in a still strong central business district.

The waste of human resources and money in this increased commuting, the inability of the automobile and the expressways to handle the traffic, the

changing character of the city largely occupied by a financial and business community and a segregated Negro population, the financing of public services for a migrant population in the face of disappearing industry and lost taxes, the interdependence of the financial and commercial life of the suburbs and the city—these are all reasons for not allowing present trends to continue.

But are there alternatives? As we have noted, there are many who doubt whether the trends are reversible. I believe the pattern can be changed, but first it is necessary to say something about the federal housing subsidies, because they are both one of the causes of the current suburban growth and one of the possible tools for creating a different picture for the future.

IT is important to understand that dispersal of the urban population in the United States has not come about solely as a result of a free and open market. Government inducements to buy in the suburbs have been substantial and have brought about a remarkable increase in home ownership since the war. In 1957, of the total mortgage debt of \$107 billion on one- to four-family non-farm homes, \$47.2 billion was FHA-insured or V.A.-guaranteed. Of the balance, so-called conventional loans, a substantial portion was held by savings and loan associations. The funds involved in the federal encouragement of home ownership are thus enormous compared to the amounts involved for rental housing in the city.

The success of the federal housing program in suburbia results from the availability of mortgage funds that have not had to measure up to the usual free-market considerations of risk and competitive yield of other investments. Guarantees and insurance by the United States provide money for suburban home ownership at interest rates lower than the market over longer periods of time.

A subsidy is also involved in the activities of federal and state savings and loan associations. Because law restricts the investments of these associations largely to home mortgages, the flow of capital has been directed artificially to suburbia, and money has been made available for houses at rates lower than those that would have been available if the home owner had had to compete for the funds with other sources of investment of comparable risk. To the extent that deposits in savings and loan associ-

ations are insured by the federal government under the Federal Home Loan Bank System, capital is attracted that *must* be invested in home mortgages. The federal insurance, therefore, constitutes an indirect subsidy.

Another heavily subsidized federal housing program — public housing — has also contributed to the condition of our cities. Public housing has been the prisoner of its opponents, who have largely determined its character. Locating public housing projects in the inner city has contributed to keeping lower-income people in the city and has strengthened the patterns of segregation, except in a few cases where careful planning has been able to achieve successfully integrated projects. One arm of the federal housing program has financed housing for middle-income families in the suburbs. The question may well be asked: "Why should not the opposite program have been adopted?"

OTHER federal subsidies have also had their influence. The disproportionate amount of the federal budget allotted to agriculture has helped bring about the mechanization of the farm and speeded up the migration of both Negro and white farm labor to the city. Similarly, the federal defense highway program has represented an enormous subsidy to the automobile at the expense of mass transportation. Whether these subsidies have been beneficial or detrimental is not pertinent here; what they indicate is that the condition of our metropolitan regions is not the result of "natural" forces alone. The federal government has played a major role in contributing to the shape and character of urban America.

The forces at work in the city and region are cumulative. They all move

together toward making the city a more desirable or less desirable place to live. The federal subsidies that have encouraged highway construction instead of mass commuter transportation and thus drawn industry out of the city have reduced the city's tax base. A lower tax base means less money for education and for the adjustment of rural migrants to urban life. Poor schools and changing neighborhoods encourage middle-class white families to move to the suburbs. Higher welfare costs increase the tax rate and thus encourage industry to relocate in outlying areas. All these factors are interrelated. If they can be altered, it might be possible to reverse the cycle of urban decay and deterioration and move the forces of the market place toward renewal and reconstruction.

A total program that recognizes the interdependence of city and suburbs is needed. The creation of new communities on the outskirts of suburbia is a necessary element in the restoration of the inner city. The vitality of the city is, in turn, important for all of the inhabitants of the region. A total program must be able to differentiate between which of the forces at work in the region must be shaped by government action in a private enterprise system and which do not lend themselves to it.

We cannot, for example, prevent those industries that do not require a central location from moving to less expensive land in outlying areas. However, through a regional open-space plan, we can limit the areas in which these industries may choose to locate. We cannot prevent middle-class white families from leaving the cities because their children are not being educated in accordance with middle-class standards. But we can induce middle-class families

to live within the city if we can create areas large enough to establish a genuine community with good schools. We can find the land for these communities by clearing industrial as well as residential slum property, provided that we undertake to relieve the city of part of its tax burden or change the methods by which it collects taxes.

"New towns" are already being created in areas beyond suburbia to accommodate an exploding population, but these "new towns" may become exclusive suburbs, which in time will be engulfed by suburban sprawl.

I am suggesting a different kind of "new town" program. We should attempt to create "new towns" pursuant to regional open space and transportation plans. These towns will also accommodate industrial workers and industries displaced by an intensified residential and industrial slum clearance program in the core areas of our major cities. At the same time, on the land within the cities made available by slum clearance, new communities can be established for middle-income families.

THIS program would make both the central city and the "new towns" more heterogeneous in social composition, reduce travel distances to work and thus diminish the urban transportation problem, and, finally, bring suburban sprawl under control through regional planning of open spaces and mass transportation.

Present segregation practices are a serious obstacle to this kind of program; at the same time they provide an additional reason why a program designed to create heterogeneous communities both within the city and beyond the suburbs has become imperative. Not only is the Negro population of our cities increasing in numbers but housing for Negroes is becoming increasingly segregated. The question of segregation is always present when the character and location of public housing and urban renewal projects are being determined. An unwillingness to face up to it has paralyzed city planning. It is necessary to deal with the question not only for the sake of civil rights for Negroes but in order to free city planning from some unspoken assumptions that underlie almost everything that happens about housing in our cities.

Juvenile delinquency and adult crime, school drop-outs and unemployment, the spread of slums and the cost of welfare are all related to segregation in the cores of our cities. The social and economic costs of these problem areas both to the Negro and to the community as a whole are enormous.

The Negro ghettos will not dissolve of themselves. The middle-class Negro family has had great difficulty in finding suitable housing outside of the segre-

Megalopolis Rediscovered: Megalopolis is an old Greek word, invented by real estate operators in the Peloponnesus 2,000 years before the first European settlers landed on what is now the main street of the New World—the northeastern seaboard of the United States. Because the original Megalopolis is still a very small town in Greece today, it took some courage, as well as a lively imagination, to apply the name to the almost solidly urbanized stretch between southern New Hampshire and northern Virginia. Yet the application seemed normal to Jean Gottmann, Russian-born Professor of Economic and Human Geography in the School of Political Science at the University of Paris.

Having come to this country to teach at Princeton and Johns Hopkins, and to think at Princeton's famous Institute of Advanced Studies, Professor Gottmann stayed to give expert wartime advice to the Board of Economic Warfare and the Foreign Economic Administration in Washington. As he traveled repeatedly back and forth between Boston and Richmond, with way stops in New York and the national capital, he grew ever more deeply impressed by the continuous nature of land settlement over hundreds of miles. After fifteen years of pondering this phenomenon, and five more years of digging into it and writing about it, he published in 1961, under the aegis of the Twentieth Century Fund, a book titled *Megalopolis*.

That inch-and-a-half-thick volume now is as great a classic as Alexis de Tocqueville's earlier critique of American political and social institutions. On December 3, 1964, the American Geographical Society awarded Professor Gottmann its Charles P. Daly Medal for "distinguished geographical services." Where science places the modern city, in context of frightening wilderness, can be measured by names on the roster of previous Daly Medal winners: Robert E. Peary, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Roald Amundsen, Robert Bartlett, and Roy Chapman Andrews.

—JOHN LEAR.

gated lower-income neighborhoods; only very recently has housing for these and higher-income Negroes begun to open up. A policy of nondiscrimination in rentals or sales can help, but the ghettos are still so large that only a major plan to induce a substantial part of the Negro working population to live in outlying "new towns" can bring about a more uniform and just distribution of these people among the population as a whole.

We should not underestimate the difficulties of creating interracial communities. Experience shows, however, that it is possible to create interracial housing in stable communities where the housing is sufficiently subsidized. The existence of heterogeneous communities in outlying areas will make it more possible for the Negro to relate to the urban culture. Schools in a smaller community, for example, can be so located that even if there are neighborhoods within the community that are predominantly white or predominantly Negro all of the children can attend the same schools. So many industrial workers are Negro that any problem for creating outlying "new towns" for industry and industrial workers must aim for heterogeneity. As for the cities, where Negroes are already established, a program to bring back middle-income white families must encompass the creation of interracial middle-income neighborhoods. If America is not prepared to accept interracial communities, there is little hope of arresting the decline of the city.

Only a slight extension of the tools already in hand is needed to foster the development of middle-income communities within the city and of "new towns" on the outskirts of suburbia. The Housing Community Development Act of 1964 (which was not enacted into law) proposed for the first time that the Federal Housing Administration insure mortgages for the purchase of land leading to the development of new communities. The Administration thus proposed to finance "new town" developments, although the result may well have been that under such a program the "new towns" would have become exclusive suburbs like many "new towns" now being built with private financing.

Assume, however, that FHA and V.A. financing were abandoned except in urban renewal areas in the city and in "new town" developments. In addition, assume that a regional open space and transportation plan were required before this financing is made available. Assume, further, that the regulations governing savings and loan associations were amended to allow them to allocate a substantial portion of their funds to financing mortgages for multiple dwellings, and to limit financing of either homes or multiple dwellings to established suburban areas, to the cities,

or to "new towns" in regions where an open space and transportation plan exists. Moreover, suppose that the V.A. and FHA regulations prohibiting discrimination because of race were also applied to savings and loan associations. Suppose, in addition, that the FHA programs for middle-income housing were made available in the "new towns," so that the goal of an economically heterogeneous community would be vigorously pursued. Suppose, finally, that each "new town" were required to provide some minimum of public housing and housing for the elderly in order to be eligible for federal financing.

THESE federal tools, almost all of them readily adaptable, would be powerful inducements for the creation of heterogeneous "new towns" in which individuals and industry displaced from the city, together with some of the 80,000,000 new people to be housed between now and 1980, could be accommodated. Moreover, federal incentives could be geared to the creation of "new towns" of higher density so that effective mass transportation between them and the center city could be developed.

Assume that the federal urban renewal programs for clearing residential slums and renewing central business districts were extended to permit the clearance of industrial slums. And assume that the federal government were prepared to finance the construction of industrial facilities in "new town" industrial parks. Can there be any doubt that such a program would have enormous impact in hastening the creation of "new town" developments and in clearing land within the city for the construction of middle-income communities?

It should be clear by now that I am proposing regional planning only in a most restricted sense. It is not necessary for public agencies to provide compre-

hensive master plans for each region, leaving no room for diversity created by private choices. Some planning, however, is necessary, particularly by the agencies responsible for water, sewer, and transportation because they must be able to project the future needs for public services of an ever-expanding population. In many places these agencies plan independently of each other, and the federal agencies that subsidize housing do no planning at all. What each region now needs is a plan covering all of the agencies already involved in the expenditure of public funds, stating where and when the public will spend its money for water systems, sanitary and storm sewers, highways, and rapid mass transportation, and in what areas subsidies will be available for housing. Regional growth can thus be controlled, with private enterprise left to develop variety within the over-all framework of the plan.

An essential part of the program I am describing is the clearance of industrial slums at the cores of most of America's cities. One of the major obstacles to this has been the reluctance of cities to lose industry for fear of further jeopardizing their real estate tax base. But industry is moving to the suburbs anyway, and the real estate tax structure of the city will have to be revised in any event. Real estate taxes in most places have already reached the limits of economic feasibility. Assessments against property are still the major means by which cities collect taxes, and they have fallen behind in their share of the total tax dollar.

A case can be made that the wealth produced by the cities has been drained out by federal taxes and redistributed first to agriculture, second to suburbia, and third to the cities. At the same time the welfare costs of the cities have in-

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"Frankly, Johnson, I don't like the way you've stopped buttering me up."

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Freedom's Other Face

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following guest editorial is by General Carlos P. Romulo, president of the University of the Philippines.*

I HAVE heard it said in Asia that America is a culture in which the pursuit of happiness has become a plaguing ideal and that this principle accounts for much of the vulgarity and brazenness in American behavior, as well as for the intensity of its pragmatic point of view and its almost anarchic individualism.

As a student of American culture and as one who has had a chance to observe it closely, I can say that these observations are not accurate. Nevertheless, if American life and culture as seen by others suggest these qualities, that fact has to be understood in terms of the circumstances attendant to America's establishment as a nation. America was founded by men who wanted to slough off the atmosphere of guilt and persecution in Europe. Central to the viewpoint of America's founding fathers was the idea of liberty. It was the motive of their risky journey, of their escape, as it were, from the ancient civilization of Europe, and it was their justification for having left their homeland. The American founding fathers set out to realize a new order, a new community in which the sense of human possibilities would be coterminous with the vast space in the new-found continent.

Freedom, therefore, was to be the absolute condition of the new existence. It was to be the ethos of the new com-

munity. This idea was later to be articulated most forcefully in the nation's political life, but even at the start the nature of the new milieu itself conspired to make freedom a very real condition of life. The relative solitude of the farm; the privacy and space in the new towns; the absence of doctrinal and even alien power to threaten existence and peace—all these made the idea of freedom a concrete and insistent fact. The self-consciousness of a free existence also created in the situation a condition for passionate individualism.

It may be said that the expanse of the prairies and the irreducibility of the forces of nature demanded homogeneity on the part of the first inhabitants from Europe in the new continent. The nature of the territory itself demanded that they stand together. But as de Tocqueville observed, conformity in the American sense means conformity on the ideal of freedom, with the result that the average American never feels freer than when he thinks and feels together with his fellow Americans. This unity in an ideal accounts for the strength of American nationalism at the present time. But if America truly stands for this ideal, it is also to be expected that it should promote it and secure the reality of liberty under any circumstances. In the consciousness of the mind of the world, America is freedom.

It is precisely because the world has this expectation of America that the contradictions appear immediately evident and harshly contrasting. For example, even at the very start of its political life

America tried to resolve the issue of equality. The notion of freedom was raised as a universal right, to be extended to and enjoyed by every man irrespective of color. It is also a historical fact that this principle had the unswerving affirmation of one of America's great Presidents and that the very concept of democracy had its most succinct and eloquent articulation in this nation. But the issue of the Civil War was not resolved by the peace that later ensued. Lincoln paid with his life for a principle, and the cause he fought for continued to be affirmed by the North and, to some extent, even by the South, but its absolute resolution could not be achieved within the lifetime of its greatest affirmer.

The same issue, therefore, cropped up once more, in greater intensity this time and with greater irony because of the advance of our scientific and intellectual thought. The irony was played up in the newspapers and in the various media of communication: Little Rock and James Meredith; the place of Negroes in restaurants and in vehicles. It was indeed grimly ironic that this should still be the core of contention in modern America. But in this issue, the American commitment to the ideal of equality and freedom proved itself unswayed. For the decision of the Supreme Court and the concern of the federal government to prevent discrimination proved that the American nation is sincerely for it and that it does not hesitate to use its legitimate powers to enforce it.

Freedom was also the controlling issue in the field of American foreign relations. For what happens in this nation touches a very significant aspect in the life of other cultures. Why is this so?

ALL cultures and all nations in the world, I think, accept the premise that freedom is to be preferred to slavery; the good life to poverty and ignorance; dignity to humiliation. All nations in the world, therefore, have a profound, even if merely indirect and implicit, commitment to the idea of liberty. That America, therefore, could be the source of intolerance would matter profoundly to other nations. To be committed to freedom is to be committed to its reality anywhere. Its denial in America or in France or in Great Britain is an occasion for legitimate protest.

Thus it is that America is often judged in terms of its encroachments on the ideal of freedom. America is universally judged when one of its politicians makes a travesty of the academic freedom of institutions of learning and, in the name of national security, proceeds to engage in totalitarian methods. America is judged, too, when certain groups become apprehensive over the ideas and

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