

The activities of the Appalachian Regional Commission represent both an unprecedented effort to develop a large lagging region of this country by means of a comprehensive program and a novel experiment in the reform of intergovernmental relations.

In general, the experience has been a laboratory for experimenting with institutions and programs that combine (1) respect for national goals, (2) respect for regional and local differences, and (3) broad state and local participation in formulating plans to meet state and local needs.

Before creation of the Appalachian Regional Commission, states and local communities were faced with a maze of agencies, regulations, and forms, and it was frequently impossible to put together a coordinated plan. To secure federal funds state agencies dealt directly with counterpart federal agencies, in effect by-passing the Governors who might have been able to establish priorities and coordinate projects in such a manner as to pursue efficiently their attainment. The Appalachian Regional Development Act gave the Governors a strong voice in establishing how and where federal funds would be spent in their respective states, and it provided a single federal official with whom they could deal on a wide range of grant programs. Through this procedure the states became brokers between local areas and federal agencies with program funds. Because of the key role assigned to the Governors, it was hoped that state agencies which had operated independently would coordinate their efforts in the planning process. Instead of piecemeal and uncoordinated action, the Appalachian Regional Development Act made it possible to consider systematically which areas do have real growth potential and what kinds and amounts of investments they should receive.

The papers in this section critically appraise the performance of the Appalachian Regional Commission in relation to its objectives. They also contrast the Appalachian experience with that of the Economic Development Administration, whose regional development projects have sometimes been out of harmony with those of the Commission.

Professor Rothblatt's paper emphasizes the planning aspects of the Appalachian program and evaluates the political, social and economic benefits and costs that have been associated with it. He finds that "the Appalachian program may well embody the most significant institutional development in our nation for regional planning since the establishment of TVA." He concludes that despite various problems the Appalachian program has on balance been successful.

Rainey and Cotton evaluate the work of the Appalachian Commission as insiders, but this in no way precludes them from constructive criticism of its activities. They place the Appalachian program in the context of earlier regional development efforts and contrast it with those being made under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965. They conclude that "The next generation of regional and area development acts should abandon the depressed area approach entirely, in favor of a comprehensive system of regional and community planning that is directly related to all forms of Federal aid."

These papers, together with the comments of Professors Saunders and Moomaw, constitute not only a comprehensive critique of the Appalachian program, but also a valuable contribution toward more effective regional policy for the entire country.