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in britain, too, the



**ASSIGN
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There is no uniform practice followed even by the most advanced democratic countries. In France, local government is highly centralised and from the Commune right up to the Ministry of the Interior the whole administration is linked up with one chain. This centralisation and uniformity in France is a sharp contrast to the decentralised character of local government in Britain. The principle accepted and followed in Britain is that a local area has the inherent right to conduct its affairs in its own way, and consistent with its requirements without the interposition of the central authority, unless supervision is clearly demanded in the interests of the public.

But in Britain, too, the centralising tendency, during recent years, has assumed alarming proportions. The position in the United States is rather appreciable and there is complete local autonomy. Every township is a local democracy, a republic within a republic.

The authority of the superior officials of state government over the affairs of the local bodies has been constitutionally reduced to the minimum. If local authorities exceed the powers vested in them by law or abuse their authority, there is the usual method of judicial redress through courts. In India, the recent Panchayat Acts passed by the state legislatures have revolutionised the nature of local government. It may generally be said that matters assigned to independent local organs should be those in which local separation of interests is clearly marked, local knowledge most important, the need of uniformity least evident, and the cooperation of private and governmental agencies likely to tell most. Where the interests concerned are clearly common to all parts of the State or where the advantages of uniformity are overwhelming control over the administration should be

national and not local. But a rigid separation of local interests is rarely complete. A carefully adjusted cooperation of local and central organs is often required to obtain the best results. Experience has shown that the central government should exercise some control over local bodies, because, as Sidgwick points out, “the central government has greater enlightenment derived from greater general knowledge, wider experience and more highly trained intellects.” But such a control should be exercised with a view to the efficient discharge of local duties and responsibilities.

Undue interference and direction is bound to destroy local initiative and local responsibility. Excessive central control may also encourage favouritism in the local services, thus, vitiating the very idea of local government.

Whenever party spoils intervene, efficiency disappears and development at all levels is severely retarded. While we do not discount the practical utility of central control over local bodies, it may, however, be emphasised that the degree of control should vary in proportion to the efficiency of a local body. Were all local bodies of the same standard of efficiency, the problem of supervision and apportionment of functions would have been easier.

But this is not so. Everywhere the central government is continually faced with the difficulty that all local bodies are not equally efficient. This may be essentially due to the differences in the size of local areas and resources of local bodies. The smaller municipalities, howsoever noble the ideal of public spirit of the citizens may be, cannot be expected to maintain the same services as the larger bodies.

They have to depend on the doles of the central government which necessitate more rigid control on their activities. Moreover, the traditional view that local functions are the concern of the locality itself has lost its validity. There are no local functions in that sense now. The making and maintenance of local roads, lighting, drainage, cleansing, etc., have, under modern scientific analysis, been found to involve important national aspects as well. Under these conditions there can no longer be any clear-cut demarcation of spheres of influence between central and local governments. They must collaborate, consistent with the requirements of the Welfare State, over the entire field of governmental activity.

This means a close integrated partnership between central and local authorities for high achievements in municipal administration. It is, however, essential to avoid reducing local authorities to the position of mere agents of the central government if they are to continue to make their indispensable contribution to the democratic way of life.