

The following is my response to an essay on local and area government structure which was written by the Chairman of the Cincinnati Business Committee and appeared in "The Cincinnati Enquirer" on June 19, 2011. "The Enquirer" published this as a guest column on Sunday, June 26, 2011.

-----Dusty Rhodes-----

The most astonishing thing about Sunday's boldly bordered, full page "Call to Action" essay in the "Enquirer" is the assumption that the writer has some special insight that permits him to tell us how to recreate our political structure. In fact his very first premise is wrong.

We do not have a "city/county government" or a "dual government system". We actually have two separate entities with different duties and responsibilities. The "city" (assuming he means Cincinnati) is a local government dealing with local issues as are the other cities, villages and townships in the county. Hamilton County is an administrative arm of the state to handle area wide matters.

What can be more effective and efficient than this? Does he suggest Cincinnati assume some special role and begin making decisions for entities outside its corporate limits? Or should Hamilton County take over local services for Cincinnati? Either option would be an expensive, cumbersome disaster.

It is not surprising that some business interests would promote these models. To support his demand for bigger government the writer cites The Banks development as "a perfect example". Instead of saying "thank you" for all the millions of taxpayers money spent on this questionable project, he complains that it was not done quickly enough. The private business subsidies didn't occur on his timetable. He just wants to tap the public till at will.

And that perhaps explains the hidden agenda of these elites who constantly promote government consolidation. They seem to want a "one stop shop" for their "entitlements" and "financing options". Let us "streamline" the process so they are not delayed in getting the money. Our money, that is.

It's funny that the writer should mention the airport. While admitting the facility has now been "right sized", he overlooks the fact that it was overbuilt with the ardent support of local business leaders. The decision to grant a virtual monopoly to Delta Airlines which gave us the highest airfares in the country was made with the blessings of our "captains of industry".

Even stranger is the absence of any recognition that the airport which is supposed to serve the entire region is being run by one small county. If the message is

“metropolitan government” (and make no mistake that is what this is all about for the fifth time in the last half century) why not call for a truly “metropolitan” airport?

But the most glaring inconsistency in the entire article can be summed up by this question: Why would he suggest we “centralize” governments for supposed efficiencies and then “de-centralize” the Cincinnati Public Schools to make them better?

This “political leader” is “worried” about serving the people of Hamilton County and preserving their right to elect their officials and hold them accountable at the ballot box. I am also more concerned about business leaders accumulating tax breaks and special deals at our expense than I am about government structure. And I’ll bet most voters are as well.

June 26, 2011