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A recent column in "Cincy" magazine by Attorney Don Mooney proposed eliminating county government. Mr. Mooney is apparently a regular contributor to the publication. The magazine was kind enough to print an edited version of my response as a letter in their latest edition. Following are my complete comments.

THE FOLLY OF ELIMINATING COUNTIES

By Dusty Rhodes, Hamilton County Auditor

Here we go again. Whenever there is disagreement or dissension at any level of government the proposals to eliminate it by big government charlatans rise anew. The latest example is Attorney Don Mooney's misguided idea that "doing away with county government" will automatically usher in an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

So we are treated to another epic complete with all types of rhetorical hoopla. We have "elected county poobahs", "plump county government" and "long, dusty buggy rides". Why do these profound thoughts always seem incomplete without some kind of "horse and buggy" analogy? I believe that was the popular mode of transportation when our Constitution was written and there have been no direct plans to scrap that – yet.

Counties are limited forms of government. County Commissioners can't pass laws. That's how counties are limited. Who or what would perform the county functions in the county's absence? While counties are instrumentalities of the state, they are a far site closer to the people than the distant state structure in Columbus.

If counties are truly "redundant" there must be something else doing the same thing. What is that? If you can find it why not eliminate that?

State powers need to be exercised. His solution to a problem that doesn't exist is to get rid of those misguided voters choosing their County Prosecutors. Mr. Mooney would have the state's Attorney Generals appoint their pals instead.

He suggests the State Auditor should appraise all property in Ohio. Right. In his spare time. Who would audit the State Auditor in these roles? Forget about separation of powers and checks and balances. We have no need of either in the "perfect, non-county world" Mr. Mooney envisions. John Lennon's "Imagine" can be heard softly playing in the distance.

What of the Coroner, Treasurer and Clerk of Courts? His idea is to turn all their duties over to a handful of officials elected by voters from Cleveland to Coshocton and everywhere else. They, of course, would assign most of the heavy lifting over to high paid, appointed bureaucrats. Some might even come from the former county locales they are supervising.

All the work and services these county offices perform would still have to be done. The truth is you would have to pay someone to do it, whether they have retired and come back to work or not.

Meanwhile, thanks to Mr. Mooney for proposing a tantalizing hint of his brave new world in which voters no longer elect their officials and those making decisions which affect us all do not have to be directly accountable or responsive. It's too bad he doesn't acknowledge the tremendous cost and extensive inefficiencies attending his dreams.

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