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Regional Government Would Trample People's Freedom Bill Baker, Commentary, The Times @ 17A (3/11/1990)

Regional government would trample people's freedom

By Bill Bake

rom Bucharest to Berlin to Managua, people are rejecting time-worn and debilitated central controls in favor of free elections and local choice

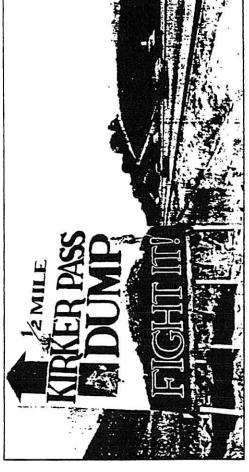
dramatic political transforma-tions, Democrats in Sacramento Apparently oblivious to these are moving in the opposite direc-Incredibly, they are introduc-EO.

ing legislation to gut the authority of Bay Area local governments by transferring municipal and county decision-making powers to a colossal new regional supergovern-

creation of an 11-member "superagency" that would deal with everything from smog controls, annexations District, the Regonal Water Quality Control Board and and building permits to dump sites, low-income housing portation Commission, the Association of Bay Area and the location of new jails. This bureaucratic monolith would take the place of scores of city and county governments and supplant, too, the Metropolitan Trans-Governments, the Bay Area Air Quality Munagement Specifically, they propose the eight local agency formation commissions.

What is more, only six of the Frankenstein agency's consisting of two county supervisors chosen by other supervisors, two city council members selected by their voting advisory members picked by the governor, the speaker of the Assembly and the Senate president pro directors would be directly elected - the remainder peers, one special district representative and three non-

Stripped of authority to deal with the major ques



But to obliterate local prerogatives is not the solution

tees that city fathers and county elected officials will

govern wisely or in the broad public interest

to unwise local decision-making. Abuse of the local po-lice power - by exclusionary or anti-growth zoning, for fair growth controls are under legal assault on a variety

instance - is best addressed in the courts. Already, un

To admit that this is a serious problem, however, does not mean that we have to serap the system of local

rule that has served the nation since the inception of

our federal system, and replace it with a commissarial frue, nothing in our republican form of rule guarant

style government accountable to no one

CONFLICTS OVER DUMP siles, such as the Kirker Pass site proposed in central Contra Costa County, might be resolved by an 11-member regional "superagency" under legislation proposed by Assembly Speaker Willie Brown.

tions attecting their constituents, city fathers would be nial In the process, government will become more rereduced to figureheads, their functions merely ceremomote and less responsive to voters

has not met the kind of resistance in Sacramento that it would find in today's Warsaw or Budapest. Yet the move to centralize power in a "superagency"

This is because the idea of a buraucratic elite who will grapple with growth problems on a broader

scale has some superticial appeal

And there is no assurance that a "superagency" will answerable to the voters, it would engage in raw motor iterian politics, serving heavily populated unlant cores at the expense of more sparsely peopled fringe areas Sure, a jail, dump or homeless shelter site might be

more speedily dictated - but at the expense of cines too small or politically impotent to prevent the loss of

would this "metro" giant site our garbage dumps? Would BART ever get to Pittsburg-Antroch, or would heavily populated San Jose dominate the expansion

plans of BART?

cision made by a county regional government? Where

What impact would Orinda or Moraga have on that de-

Preparing the way for future generations requires voluntary cooperation between our cities and counties.

of constitutional grounds

not coercion. How, for instance, would the superagency rule on the question of building Gateway Boulevard?

> gional growth demands, for example, or rejecting plans for jails or waste dumps "in our back yard." "s a consepulling up the draw bridges, in effect, to new families and leaving waste disposal and inmate problems to refusing to issue enough residential permits to meet requence, some communities have walled themselves off, neighboring communities

Too often, local governments have behaved selfishly.

The Bay Area needs a "superagency" like Romania needed the Securitate

their autonomy.

Assemblyman Baker is a Danville Republican