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## Urban regimes and racial politics: New Orleans during the Barthelemy years

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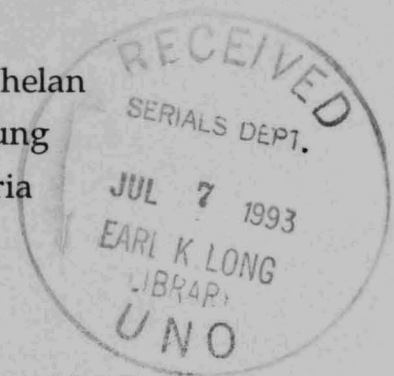
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## Urban Regimes and Racial Politics: New Orleans During the Barthelemy Years

Robert K. Whelan  
Alma H. Young  
Mickey Lauria



Working Paper No. 7

1991

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**Urban Regimes and Racial Politics:  
New Orleans During the Barthelemy Years**

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Working paper (University of New Orleans Division of Urban  
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Stephen L. Elkin introduced the concept of "urban regime." In brief, Elkin's conceptualization tied together land use interests, city politicians, and functional bureaucracies in a theory of urban politics. Elkin argued that over time, land use interests in a city would seek policy outcomes which would further urban development and reduce public disputes. Thus, the land use interests sought stable alliances with city politicians. In turn, city politicians looked for the steady allegiance of blocks of voters. The bureaucracies, which delivered the city services, responded to the land use alliance on issues deemed essential for promoting the economic position of the city (Elkin, 1985 used the example of the distribution of police services). The essence of the regime idea is that dominant coalitions, over periods of time, decide policy and provide a vision for the city.

The regime concept has been used by several scholars of urban politics. Todd Swanstrom argues that regime theory can integrate the insights of urban economics with the insights of urban politics. Swanstrom believes that "a theory of urban regimes can capture the variety of urban politics while still achieving a useful level of generalization" (1988:107-108). Swanstrom (1988:108) proposes that we focus on "the tension between economic and political logic in the formation of state policy." For Swanstrom, the type of regime developed in a city will be determined by economic pressures, capital accumulation, and class composition. In addition, political leadership and its values will influence the nature of the regime.

The essays in Stone and Sanders (1987) operate from a regime paradigm. In summarizing the themes of these papers, Stone observes that "politics matters....that politics is

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shaped profoundly by the interrelationship between state and market...and that we need appropriate and realistic criteria to judge policies and political practices" (Stone and Sanders, 1987:17-18). Subsequently Stone, focusing on who is guiding development policy and to what effect, presents a typology of regime types (Stone and Sanders, 1987:272-273). The first type, the corporate regime, is one in which private interests--large downtown businesses--play a major role in guiding development policy with the effect that public authority and resources are used to subsidize investment. Elkin's (1987:25-51) description of Dallas provides one example. It is suggested that Atlanta (Reed, 1987), Baltimore (Stoker, 1987), and New York (Shefter, 1985; Pecorella, 1987; Doig, 1987; and Savitch, 1988) also follow the corporate regime pattern.

The second type, the progressive regime, is less familiar to us in the United States. In a progressive regime, middle- and lower-class neighborhood groups play a major role in policy-making. When dominant, a progressive regime will expand services, pursue redistributive policies, and, perhaps, limit growth and place controls on land developers. Body-Gendrot's description of Paris' 13th arrondissement is one example (see Stone and Sanders, 1987:125-143). In his Progressive Cities, Pierre Clavel gives American examples: Hartford, Berkeley, Burlington and Santa Monica. Cities such as Boston and San Francisco have also been progressive on occasion. Examples from outside the United States are more common. We think of such progressive British local governments as Liverpool (Parkinson, et al., 1988) and Sheffield (Baker and Carlson, 1987), and the Doré administration in Montreal, Canada (Leonard and Leveillee, 1986).

Finally, Stone presents a third type: the caretaker regime. In a caretaker regime, small businesses and homeowners constrain city governments in policy-making. When dominant, caretaker regimes will rely on the market and do as little as possible, while minimizing taxes,

government expenditures, and government activity. Sanders' (1987) case study of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is a classic example of a caretaker regime. As we shall see below, New Orleans also exemplified a caretaker regime for many years.

First it should be noted that no city will precisely fit a particular category. Most cities evidence characteristics of more than one type but appear to be predominantly characterized by a particular regime. Second, one must always bear in mind that typologies, such as the urban regime scheme, do not ensure good theory, rather that good theory allows one to construct accurate and insightful typologies. Such typologies allow us to communicate and/or distill complex situations into theoretical shorthand. We find it easier to manipulate these concepts and their relationships. Thus we can conceptually isolate the necessary relationships and alter the contingent ones in order to rethink the implications of alternative empirical conjunctures. This theoretical manipulation is best done in tandem with empirical evaluation in a recursive fashion. This is the exercise of this paper.

Recently urban regime theory in particular and the "new urban politics" in general have come under attack for being theoretically undeveloped (Cox, 1991a, 1991b, also see Stone, 1991 and Fainstein, 1991 for their rejoinders). Basically, Cox is transferring debates in geography (see Antipode and Society and Space concerning epistemology and methodology in what has been called the new "locality studies") to the new urban politics literature.<sup>1</sup> Cox's most telling point is that descriptive concepts must be developed rationally and interpreted and, if necessary, respecified using higher-level abstractions. Cox claims that "new urban politics" concepts (e.g., the growth coalition, growth machine, and urban regime) have not been critically examined in light of the higher-level abstractions of his choice, the state and the structure of capital.<sup>2</sup> It is our reading of this literature that these concepts from the "new urban politics" are concrete

representations at the local scale of the higher-level abstraction "the state," paying particular attention to the changing structure of capital (e.g., see Swanstrom, 1985 and Logan and Molotch, 1987). More clearly stated, we feel that Cox's point is that he does not agree with the specification of these concepts in the literature he cites.

In many instances we share Cox's unease. Rather than attempt to respecify these concepts by reviewing other scholars' research with all the caveats that would create, it is the purpose of this paper to describe and analyze the nature of the New Orleans urban regime focusing on the first term of Sidney Barthelemy, the second black mayor of New Orleans (1986-1990). First, we believe that regime theory has been unspecified particularly in relation to racial politics. Thus we begin by discussing the changing relationship of blacks to the prevailing New Orleans regime. Second, since we agree with Cox (1991a) that Stone's regime typology is undertheorized in terms of the structure of capital and the role of the state in its interpretation of growth coalitions, we will pay particular attention to the role of the "consensus seeking para-apparatus" (see Clark and Dear, 1984) in policy development. Finally, we feel that the relationship between the structure of the electoral coalition and the stability of the governing regime has been undertheorized in urban regime theory. In the concluding section, we summarize our version of a theoretically reconstructed urban regime theory.

### **Blacks and the New Orleans Regime**

Blacks in New Orleans have played a role in electoral politics for over a century. As early as the turn of the century, blacks (mainly Creoles of color) had some influence in local elections. That influence was weakened by the passage of Jim Crow laws in the 1920s. In the

1940s, a time of deep divisions within the white power structure and hotly contested elections, blacks were successful in gaining some access to the political system. Yet, as in the rest of the South, significant electoral participation by blacks did not occur until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. By the late 1960s, blacks were an influential element within the electoral coalition, and as such, created the opportunity for change within the urban regime.

Even so, politics within the black community continued to reflect the historical and cultural distinction between the major groups: those of an Anglicized heritage and those of a French heritage (who later became known as Creoles of color). Since antebellum days, the Creoles of color represented a large, articulate and often well-to-do free black population. During the period of Federal occupation and Reconstruction, the black Creoles were able to secure their political and civil rights. Many local leaders of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s were Creoles who sought to regain the rights they had won, and lost, 75 years earlier. The divisions within the black community have weakened their power vis-à-vis the governing coalition.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 had an immediate impact on the black political landscape in two ways: First was an increase in black electorate, from 17.5 percent in 1964 to 25.2 percent in 1966; and second, the creation of black political organizations. These organizations served to institutionalize and strengthen the black vote. The two major organizations formed at this time were the Southern Organization for Unified Leadership (SOUL), a political offshoot of the national Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Community Organization for Urban Politics (COUP), a more conservative group formed in the black Creole stronghold of the 7th Ward. These groups served as intermediaries to broker the black vote and became convenient channels for white politicians to gain access to blacks (Hirsch, 1992a: 57).



In 1969 the major black organizations endorsed councilman-at-large Maurice "Moon" Landrieu for mayor. His opponent in the runoff, Jimmy Fitzmorris, refused to appeal to black voters. Landrieu won with 90 percent of the black vote and a minority of white votes; black turnout was 75 percent. Landrieu's success in garnering the black vote ensured that black political organizations would be viewed as major players whose influence would be felt in the highest levels of local government.

Landrieu was well-known to blacks long before he ran for mayor. As a freshman state legislator in 1960-61, he opposed (virtually alone) the segregationists at every turn during the school integration crisis. As leader in the City Council (1965-69), he responded to black needs.

Once in power Landrieu used the political process to open up opportunities for blacks. He increased the number of blacks in civil service jobs from 19.4 percent in 1970 when Landrieu took office to 43 percent in 1978 when he left office (Hirsch, 1992a:61-68). He named the city's first black Chief Administrative Officer (Terrence Duvernay). And he appointed several blacks as department heads, including Sidney Barthelemy to the Welfare Department.<sup>3</sup> Landrieu also was successful at providing significant patronage to blacks.

As Hirsch has suggested, "Landrieu was able to offer new opportunities to blacks without grievously antagonizing whites because he was cutting large new slices off an expanding economic pie" (Hirsch, 1992a:74). The pie expanded because of Landrieu's abilities to bring significant federal revenues into the city. In order to do this, Landrieu had first to convince the city's elite that it was appropriate to receive federal dollars: that federal aid was no longer to be seen as an intrusion by the federal government into local affairs. Much of this aid was antipoverty funds that he funneled through predominantly black channels, especially Total Community Action (TCA). State funds were also forthcoming following Edwin Edwards'

election as governor in 1971, with the help of black voters. Especially important for the patronage that could be dispensed was the development of the Louisiana Superdome, a state facility, which opened in New Orleans in 1975. The publicly financed Superdome was the catalyst for the multibillion dollar private investment that transformed the central business district throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. It was in the early 1970s that a significant influx of outside capital began to penetrate New Orleans. Growth was so strong under Landrieu's administration that a Growth Management Program for the downtown area was developed and instituted (see Brooks and Young, 1981).

In 1977 a black Creole, Ernest "Dutch" Morial, a State Appeals Court Judge, was elected mayor. Morial won by only 5,471 votes; he garnered 97 percent of the black vote and 19 percent of the white vote (mostly affluent Uptowners), but not the support of most of the established black leadership (Hirsch, 1992a:83-85). Most of the black political organizations saw Morial as a spoiler who did not condone political patronage. Therefore they threw their lot in with liberal white candidates who might be more forthcoming with patronage. Morial defeated the liberal whites during the primaries and then went on to the runoff and defeated Joseph DiRosa, a conservative, white city councilman.

In a major speech just prior to his inauguration, Morial called for a revision of public priorities, a retooling of public-private partnerships that would enlist private resources for public ends, and a reinvigorated, powerful role for the mayor (whom, he said, had a citywide mandate to assert the public interest). He promised to bring new personnel into city government on the basis of "intellect and public dedication regardless of race, creed or national origin ...[I] have no intention of politicizing the incoming administration on narrow grounds of reverse discrimination" (Perry and Stokes, 1987:229).

Morial's early appointments reflected his emphasis on merit, not obligation. For example, some of his mid-level appointments were recent graduates of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where he was a fellow before his inauguration. Morial tried to curtail patronage and thus most of the established black political organizations lost access to the kind of patronage they had enjoyed during the Landrieu years. Morial also tried to crack the entrenched bastions of white privilege and power by demanding free and open access to the public's business across-the-board.

Morial's assertion of a primary role for the office of mayor (in the past the mayor was not considered one of the influentials in the city) brought him into conflict with the city's social and economic oligarchy. Since the turn of the century, members of the oligarchy had ruled from their positions on the many nonelected boards and commissions which govern major areas like the port, the lakefront, sewerage and water, and the city debt. In 1979 Morial took on the Board of Liquidation, City Debt, which was self-perpetuating, by encouraging a lawsuit to end the board's "racially restrictive membership." The judge ruled against the board, nullified its last two appointments, and ordered the board to make a good-faith effort in considering a non-white (Hirsch, 1992b:19). By the time Morial left office, most of the major boards and commissions had at least one black member. Throughout his term in office Morial bristled at the independence of the boards and commissions while he urged them to work in tandem with the city administration to improve the area's economy.

A major emphasis of the Morial administration was enhancing the economic development of the city. Morial continued the Landrieu success in attracting large amounts of federal funds to the city. He created a new Office of Federal Programs and Special Projects to creatively use federal funds to tackle major urban problems, and established the city's first professionally

staffed Office of Economic Development to develop and implement an economic development strategy for the city as a whole. Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG) were used to augment downtown development as well as neighborhood revitalization (Young 1984). While he continued to support the large-scale tourism begun under the Landrieu administration, Morial also tried to diversify the economy by creating the infrastructure for a manufacturing base through the development of the Almonaster-Michoud Industrial District. As Morial said, "we can ill afford...to alone remain the hotel-keepers and waiters for well-heeled tourists" (as quoted in Hirsch 1992b:29).

Morial tried to encourage the city to pay its own way, realizing that the federal and state aid on which the city depended was rapidly drying up. He introduced a number of local revenue measures in an attempt to resolve the growing fiscal crisis. However, none of the more progressive measures passed. The drop in federal and state funds was dramatic. In 1978, 57 percent of the city's annual operating budget came from federal and state funds; by 1982, only 30 percent were from those sources. During Morial's term in office, city employment dropped by one-third. Morial said that his greatest disappointment in office was his failure to come up with an adequate revenue base.

Morial's 1982 re-election campaign was a very bitter one which centered around what was termed his "arrogant personality." Many in the black community thought Morial was called "arrogant" by the white elite simply because he sought to assert the rights of blacks in the socio-political life of the community. Thus blacks voted for Morial in droves. He was re-elected in 1982 with 99 percent of the black vote (and the endorsement of most black political organizations) and 14 percent of the white vote. After his re-election, Morial found himself besieged by the "Gang of Five" on the City Council, which had the power to blunt his initiatives

and override his vetoes. This anti-Morial coalition included COUP's Barthelemy and Lambert Boissiere, as well as three whites: Bryan Wagner, Michael Early and Wayne Babovich.<sup>4</sup> In an attempt to regain greater control and lose his lame duck status, Morial twice tried unsuccessfully to change the City Charter's limitation to two successive four-year terms as mayor.

In sum, Morial's impact on blacks included increasing the number of blacks on the municipal workforce (from 40 percent in 1977 to 53 percent in 1985); appointing more blacks as heads of city departments, including the first black chief administrative officer and the first black police chief; and issuing two executive orders that mandated the percent of minority labor force participation in all city financed/administered projects and specified a goal for minority subcontracting participation (see Perry and Stokes, 1987).<sup>5</sup> Morial's biggest impact, however, was in having a black person occupying the mayor's office: it was a source of pride for blacks, and an opportunity for whites to come to grips with the changing political landscape.

### **Barthelemy's Term in Office (1986-90)**

With Morial unable to run for a third term of office, the 1985-86 mayoral campaign pitted two major black candidates against each other: City Councilman-at-large Sidney Barthelemy and State Senator William Jefferson (Feeney and Katz, 1985). Of Creole heritage, Barthelemy grew up in the heart of the Creole 7th Ward. He began his career in public service as head of the city Welfare Department during Moon Landrieu's administration. With the support of COUP, in 1974 he became the first black state senator since Reconstruction. He became the city's first black councilman-at-large in 1978 and was re-elected in 1982. While on the council, he waged a continual battle with Morial. Some suggest that Barthelemy, unhappy

that Morial had beat him in becoming the city's first black mayor, did his best to make life difficult for Morial as mayor. Barthelemy entered the campaign as the front-runner.

Jefferson had a decidedly non-Creole background, having grown up in northeast Louisiana in a poor, rural family. In 1976 he became the founding partner in what is still the city's most successful black law firm. In 1979 he was elected to the state Senate from uptown New Orleans, defeating a 16-year, white incumbent. While he and his law partners supported Morial in his 1977 mayoral campaign, in the 1982 campaign Jefferson ran against Morial and received only 7 percent of the votes, mostly from affluent whites Uptown.<sup>6</sup> Shortly after the election, Jefferson and Morial reached a détente and shared a "peaceful co-existence."

In the 1986 mayoral campaign Morial backed Jefferson in what he viewed as his best chance to beat Barthelemy. Morial's support helped Jefferson to run first in the primary among a field of three major candidates (the other candidate was Sam LeBlanc, a white attorney and former state representative, who ran as a "white hope" candidate). In the runoff, however, Jefferson lost to Barthelemy, 42 percent (67,698 votes) to 58 percent (93,049). Jefferson won in the predominantly black wards, but Barthelemy took the majority white wards and predominantly white wards (Time Picayune, March 2, 1986, p. 1). Thus Barthelemy won the election because he had the overwhelming majority of the white vote (85 percent) and a significant minority of the black vote (30 percent). Whites, who turned out to vote in slightly larger numbers than blacks, cast the pivotal votes in Barthelemy's election. In Barthelemy, white New Orleans had found itself a black mayor it could live with. The white vote for Barthelemy was also seen as a vote against Morial and what was viewed as his arrogance. Morial's endorsement of Jefferson helped him in the black community but probably cost him some white votes.<sup>7</sup>

The issues in the campaign seemed to center more around style than substance.

Barthelemy's campaign theme was unity and harmony as he pledged "to bring this divided city together," to get people of all races and socio-economic backgrounds to work together to improve New Orleans. In his inaugural address Barthelemy promised to "unite with the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of New Orleans, with the World Trade Center, with the City Council, and with others to expand the commercial and industrial base of this region....It is only by working together that we will attain our maximum potential" (Times Picayune, May 6, 1986, p. A8). Conspicuously missing from his address was any hint of a primary role for the office of the mayor in forging this new vision for the city.

Barthelemy's biggest challenges upon taking office were the slump in the economy and the fiscal crisis. The February 1986 figures showed unemployment in the New Orleans area was 11.1 percent (Times-Picayune, May 4, 1986, p. 1). The deficit was \$30 million, which threatened to cripple the city. With the city council's cooperation, the Barthelemy administration developed a plan that slowly chipped away at and finally eliminated the deficit (by cutting costs, raising fees, privatizing some operations and gaining cooperation from private groups and some boards and commissions; but in the process 1,200 city workers were laid off). During his first term he was unable to create a permanent revenue base for the city, and his major revenue generators -- a lottery and European-style casino for New Orleans -- were not endorsed by the business community or passed by the legislature. His relationship with pro-reform Governor Buddy Roemer was rocky at best as Barthelemy sought to stabilize state funding to the city. Barthelemy has said that he is less concerned with raising taxes than he is in creating new jobs. To that end he spent a great deal of effort during his first term trying to attract investors and foster better relations with local business leaders.

The mayor continued to stress the importance of tourism to the city. He is credited with playing a key role in luring the 1988 Republican National Convention to the city, getting voters to approve a millage increase for a \$40 million aquarium and riverfront park (see below), and getting the funds and land necessary for expansion of the New Orleans Convention Center. He also shepherded through plans for a \$40 million retail distribution center in eastern New Orleans (furthering former Mayor Morial's vision of the Almonaster-Michoud Industrial Park). On the other hand, the Barthelemy administration has witnessed a number of economic setbacks: the relocation of about 80 percent of the Amoco Production Company's New Orleans office to Houston, resulting in a loss of 850 jobs in the city; the loss of the space shuttle contract to Huntsville; and the closing of a 140-year-old retail establishment on the major retail thoroughfare downtown.

While the mayor is not blamed for these setbacks as such, he has been criticized for not articulating a coherent vision for where he wants to take the city in the 1990s. Other groups not controlled by City Hall, both public and private, have been left to chart the city's course (see below). At the same time, these groups have sought and received public resources to further their visions. The administration has continued to operate in a crisis mode, assembling plans as issues arise, instead of anticipating problems and working potential solutions into an overall strategy.

Barthelemy has been quite successful, however, in the traditional political job of distributing patronage. Among the dominant black political groups, he has strengthened the fortunes of his organization, COUP, and maintained good relations with the SOUL group. He quickly moved to take control of patronage-rich city agencies, like the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), the Regional Transit Authority (a law recently passed now enables the mayor



to name five of the eight RTA commissioners), the New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority (NOEHA), and the Aviation Board.<sup>8</sup> Relations with the Sewerage and Water Board (S & WB) have been relatively smooth, so much so that the S & WB agreed in 1988 to collect an \$8 service charge for the city.

Barthelemy has scored points in other narrowly political areas, too. He has had some success with the city's unions, playing a role in resolving a dockworker's strike in 1986 and a threatened walkout by RTA bus drivers in 1987 (both groups having largely black membership). He has also kept members of the police and fire departments from actualizing their many threats of a job action. He increased his popularity among black voters early in his administration when he ordered city work crews out on a Saturday morning in February 1987 to remove barricades erected by the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office which blocked access for a predominantly black neighborhood in New Orleans into an adjoining predominantly white Jefferson Parish neighborhood. Many in the black neighborhoods said racism was behind the barricades, which Jefferson officials said were meant to deter crime. Barthelemy has been credited with winning approval for the aquarium millage (see below) and a tax increase for the public libraries. However, during his first term he was not able to get voters to approve a \$195 property service charge, a 12 mill property tax increase for police, fire and ambulance services, or the Governor's fiscal reform package (see below).

Although he has been successful in a number of areas, charges of ineptitude still follow him. Business leaders have complained that the mayor's office is not forceful enough in solving the city's major problems, especially the fiscal crisis. In response to the perceived need for more dynamic leadership, several new groups have formed and become major actors in the economic development life of the city. Barthelemy's style of leadership has facilitated the appearance of

these groups, groups which have encouraged the fashioning of a regime that is more corporate in its approach.

### **Consensus Seeking Para-apparatuses and the Urban Regime**

For years New Orleans was known as one of the last cities in the United States where an old, long-established social aristocracy still controlled politics and business. Under Landrieu and Morial, that aristocracy's hold on politics was lessened, as new political actors came to the scene. Participation by blacks in the electoral arena helped make the new politics possible. Morial tried to forge a partnership between the public and private sectors, with the Office of the Mayor playing a major role in developing the vision of where that partnership was to take the city (see Economic Development Strategy, 1978). During the Barthelemy years the old aristocracy is losing its grip on the business world, as recent corporate newcomers to the community carve significant economic and social niches for themselves. In the process of becoming the new leaders (consensus seekers), these members of the private sector are beginning to articulate a vision for the city. It is a vision that has little input from the public sector, especially City Hall. When he was first elected mayor, Barthelemy said he felt it was important for the private sector to take the lead in creating the economic development initiatives for the city, and that happened during his first term.

#### The Business Council and the New Corporate Leadership

The group which has played a key role in taking the initiative and fashioning a vision for the city is the Business Council, a coalition of corporate leaders which formed in late 1985. The

group's vaguely stated mission is to boost economic development of the region by working to reform state and local fiscal policies, improve education and otherwise enhance the quality of local life. The group's first major project was to provide City Hall with \$250,000 in order to save the city from having to close its libraries in the face of a fiscal shortfall in 1986 (Times-Picayune, April 7, 1986, p. 1). The money enabled the city to keep six of its branch libraries open for six months. During that time the Business Council worked with the mayor to get voters to approve a millage increase which allowed all the libraries to reopen.

Late in 1986 the Business Council spun off a new organization, the Council for Fiscal Reform, which set its task as revamping Louisiana's antiquated and inefficient budget and tax systems. The council made presentations around the state, trying to convince citizens and the legislature alike that Louisiana had to broaden its tax base (by shifting some of the tax burden from business to consumers/individuals) and revise its spending habits, or else the state would go bankrupt. During the gubernatorial campaign of 1987, Buddy Roemer endorsed the council's fiscal plan and, after being elected governor, convinced the legislature to put a modified version of the plan before the voters. The package was defeated on April 29, 1989, by voters who bridled at the prospects of higher taxes. The final count showed 548,297, or 55 percent, of the voters opposed, and 448,363 voters in support of the proposal, which was on the ballot in the form of a constitutional amendment (Times-Picayune, April 30, 1989, p. 1).

Roemer's tax-restructuring plan failed because it did not win the support of blacks and blue-collar whites -- the groups the governor said would benefit the most, from lower taxes and increased jobs. In New Orleans the plan won by a mere 150 votes: 53,085 (50 percent) to 52,935. The plan lost narrowly among black voters in New Orleans, many of whom did not vote at all, despite the support of Mayor Sidney Barthelemy and former Mayor Dutch Morial. Black

proponents of the plan argued that the plan would benefit the black poor through lower sales taxes, and in the large number of jobs that would be created from the infrastructure projects to be funded by the program. The plan was opposed by State Senator William Jefferson, who said it would provide few jobs, lead to larger state deficits, and mostly benefit a handful of the state's largest corporations (Times Picayune, April 6, 1989, p. 8).

The defeat of Fiscal Reform in 1989 did not deter the Business Council from remaining involved in the affairs of New Orleans. After the defeat, however, the Business Council had a greater appreciation of the need to get public support for their plans. In the fall of 1988 the council announced its intention to create a "master economic action" plan to revitalize the New Orleans economy (Finn, 1988). The council said it was up to the business community to draw the political, professional and economic leaders together to agree on an action-based plan. The plan would build on New Orleans' strengths: tourism, the port, medical centers and the fractured-but-still-sizable remnants of the oil and gas industry. The group did not envision gathering large-scale public input. Rather, as the plan developed, the group would bounce proposals off leaders from various segments of the community.

After the defeat of Fiscal Reform, the Business Council decided to include leaders from a broad segment of the community in creating the plan now called Metrovision. Citizen focus groups were now added as part of the planning process, and a conscious effort was made to recruit widely for representatives from various groups, including groups representing the black community. Input from these groups was encouraged. A media component was also added. These two new areas of focus (citizen input and media) can be seen as an attempt by the Business Council to educate the public about the economic development needs of the community. The effort paid off, for in the fall of 1990, a portion of the Fiscal Reform package (the infrastructure

improvements program) went before the electorate and passed handily in the state and in New Orleans. Metrovision had not only served to articulate a plan for the development of the area but had also served to foster a consensus on a major element of the Business Council's long-range plans.

Business Council leadership has come from corporate newcomers to the city. The first head of the Business Council was James "Jim Bob" Moffett, chairman and CEO of Freeport-McMoran (a diversified exploration and production company), who had impressed the local business community by moving his Fortune 500 company from its New York headquarters to New Orleans (Times-Picayune, May 18, 1989, p. D1). His brand of "Texas-style civic evangelism" took the city by storm as he campaigned relentlessly for fiscal reform, as well as the other programs of the council.

With the Business Council at the helm, it has become obvious that there is an emerging business leadership in the city. In many of the recent projects the mayor's role has been that of a spokesman for the city (e.g., attracting the Republican National Convention), while the planning has come from the private sector. Yet there has been little discussion in the city about the declining role of government. As government is urged to become more like a business, there is little being said about the fact that business and government have different functions to perform.

The changing relationship between the public and private sectors during the Barthelemy administration can perhaps best be seen through a discussion of the Audubon Park Commission's aquarium project, to which we now turn.

## The Audubon Park Commission and the Aquarium

During Morial's administration there was an attempt to strip the mayor of his authority over the Audubon Park Commission (APC), which governed the Uptown park, the zoo and, at the time, the whites-only golf club (Hirsch, 1992b:39-42). The APC's 24 appointees were named by the mayor with City Council approval. In 1982, the Friends of the Zoo (a private corporation) and their allies on the APC sought state legislation to regionalize membership of the APC and give control of the park and zoo to the state, with members appointed by the governor. The state passed reorganization legislation in 1982 and again in 1983, but Morial challenged the legislation in court successfully. Speaking of the proposed state takeover, Sal Anselmo, Morial's city attorney, said "...[It] is an effort to keep blacks from getting any control of the Zoo Commission" (Hirsch, 1992b:42). The APC also began to push for zoo and park employees to be taken out of civil service.

Under the Barthelemy administration, relations between the APC and the mayor's office have been very smooth. Many of the APC's leaders were also Barthelemy backers in the 1986 mayoral campaign. Some of APC's earlier goals are being realized, including privatization of some aspects of the APC and the exemption of zoo and park employees from civil service. The impetus for both of these changes was the riverfront aquarium in downtown New Orleans, developed by the APC and fully backed by Barthelemy. The aquarium opened in 1990.

Barthelemy has called the aquarium project the centerpiece of his economic development plan, a plan that stresses the primacy of tourism. According to the mayor's office, the aquarium project is expected to do for the downtown riverfront what the Superdome did for the Poydras Street area in the 1970s, when it served as a catalyst for \$3 billion of new construction downtown. Stressing increased tourism, jobs and economic vitality, the backers of the project --

the Audubon Park Commission -- pulled together a rare consensus of community support. That support included the entire City Council, the Business Council and the Chamber of Commerce, the NAACP and Urban League, the tourism industry and riverfront developers. The small amount of opposition that surfaced had to do with the site of the project -- along the riverfront on the edge of the French Quarter, rather than with the project itself. Preservationists were against the site because they felt its scale would harm the character of the Quarter. Merchants within the heart of the Quarter (i.e., along Bourbon and Royal streets) feared the increasing competition from businesses along the riverfront. The response of Ron Forman, the executive director of the Audubon Park Commission, was that "the bigger issue is the survival of the city, not the survival of some particular merchants" (City Business, September 1, 1986, p. 1).

The project was presented to the public as a major element in the city's economic recovery. The \$40 million aquarium promised 250,000 additional tourists annually (for a total of 860,000 visitors a year), 1,000 jobs (250 permanent jobs and 750 construction jobs), and an overall economic input of \$53 million a year. The project was financed by a combination of public and private funds. Fifteen million dollars came from private sources, mainly from riverfront developers, oil companies and other corporate sponsors. The chairman of the Business Council headed the fund-raising committee. The city provided \$25 million, through bonds financed by a 3.8 millage increase in property taxes. Charges that the millage is excessive and will likely create massive patronage -- the 3.8 mills will generate almost double what is needed a year for debt service, and the term of the millage is almost twice as long as what is needed to retire the debt service -- were dismissed by the public (City Business, May 25, 1987, p. 1). The referendum on the millage increase passed handily, with 70 percent in favor. Blacks, a key to the success of the referendum, turned out to vote on the promise that jobs were to be created.

On the night of the election Barthelemy said the results meant "we'll get some black folks back to work" (Times-Picayune, November 5, 1986, p. 1).

The campaign organizers worked hard to gain black support. They made media presentations to black groups, including over 60 black ministers. They highlighted the aquarium legislation's guarantee of minority participation in 20 percent of construction work, 30 percent of all jobs, and 30 percent of all suppliers. The campaign worked, for black support was higher than white support, as blacks urgently felt the need for more jobs to be created (Times-Picayune, November 6, 1986, p. 7).

Blacks monitored the aquarium project carefully. A full-time person was hired to assist minority businesses to bid construction work and to fill job openings. To date, the goals of minority participation have been met. However, in the beginning things did not run smoothly. When the director of the APC, Ron Forman, named a three-member design team to coordinate the project, the black community cried out that there were no blacks on the design team. Within several weeks, two black architectural firms were added to the design team. Roger Ogden, then chairman of the aquarium oversight committee, called it "an historic moment in the social and economic structure of our city" (Times-Picayune, February 27, 1987, p. B-2).

In March 1988 the Audubon Park Commission created the Audubon Institute, a private, non-profit organization that would hire employees and manage the daily operations of the aquarium (Times-Picayune, March 22, 1988, p. B-1). The institute is also responsible for supervising marketing, fund-raising, concessions, and educational programs. The commission continues to make decisions related to spending, design and construction, and long-range plans. The new institute is designed to allow for the hiring of the best-qualified personnel, without the constraints of civil service. Forman said the new structure will allow them to run the aquarium



like a business rather than in the traditional government manner. The institute is composed of the present Friends of the Zoo, which handles some management duties and fund-raising at the Audubon Zoo, and a new group, the Friends of the Aquarium. All employees of the APC were given the option of working directly for the institute or staying under Civil Service; about 80 percent opted for the former, given the promise of higher salaries.

With the development of the new aquarium and the continued enhancement of the Audubon Zoo, the APC will continue to play a significant role in the growing family-oriented tourist industry in New Orleans. The director of the aquarium and the zoo, Ron Forman, has proven to be a highly successful development entrepreneur. He is credited with having changed the zoo from a foul-smelling facility to one of the premier small zoos in the nation. (For a more detailed discussion of the Zoo, see Whelan and Dupont, 1986.) More than anyone else, he sold the idea of an aquarium to the New Orleans public. He worked behind the scenes, with "no formal planning process," to get the riverfront site at the foot of Canal Street selected for the aquarium. That site responded to the needs of riverfront developers who needed to tie in the pedestrian link between two major riverfront projects. The aquarium project filled their needs and they in turn became major supporters of the project. Others in the city, especially blacks, were encouraged to support the project because of the jobs promised. Along the way, Forman has become one of the foremost development entrepreneurs in the city.

As the example of the aquarium project showed, consensus seeking para-apparatuses, in this case quasi-public development organizations, are extremely important actors in the New Orleans regime. In particular, some of the more autonomous agencies have emerged as activists in the would-be corporate regime. Leading development actors have developed autonomous power bases.

By looking at New Orleans over the past 20 years, we have seen that the issue of race influences the type of regime that is developed. With the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, large numbers of blacks became available to be incorporated into an electoral coalition. Incorporation entailed responding to the needs of the black community, as articulated by the leaders of the newly formed black political organizations. The needs centered around expanding services and generating greater resources, needs that were unlikely to be provided by the kind of caretaker regime that New Orleans had known historically. Thus, with the incorporation of large numbers of blacks into the electoral arena, the stage was set for the creation of a corporate regime. It is a process that has been developing for the past 20 years, and has seen the election of two black mayors, both of whom come from Creole backgrounds.

The dilemma facing the emerging governing coalition in New Orleans was how to appear progressive in addressing the needs of the black community and yet meet the needs of the major business interests. The solution in New Orleans, as elsewhere, was to stress the creation of jobs and black business involvement. Starting with Landrieu, the influx of federal dollars (first anti-poverty dollars and later economic development dollars) made it possible for some of the needs of the black community (or at least those of its leaders) to be met. Both Landrieu and Morial tried to use the mayor's office to refashion the city, and both used promises of jobs generated by federally financed programs to garner black support. By the time Barthelemy was elected mayor, federal dollars were no longer available for economic development and the mayor had to rely even more heavily on private dollars to fuel the economy and, in the process, create the kinds of resources that could be used to garner black support.

With the changing economic fortunes of the city, the kinds of symbolic overtures to the black community also changed. During Morial's administration, there was much more emphasis

on bringing blacks into the mainstream of all facets of society and of making the mayor the spokesman for the newly incorporated. So sure was Morial of his appeal to the black community that he was willing (and able) to bypass the black political organization during his first mayoral campaign. His combative nature in advocating on behalf of their rights brought Morial strong support from many blacks. Barthelemy's message has been to bring the community together again, but the emphasis has been on reassuring whites that they still have a major role to play in the development of the city. It was a message that did not play well in the black community until, in his second mayoral election, he faced a white opponent. Then the black community rallied to his side in order to be sure of keeping a black person in the mayor's office.

Barthelemy has used his access to patronage to reward blacks, especially the black political groups, but his symbolic overtures to blacks have been kept low-key. His overtures have been to the white corporate community, and he has served to facilitate their vision for the redevelopment of the city, not fashion one of his own.

The interracial politics of New Orleans is familiar to most black-majority cities. What is unique about New Orleans is the intra-racial politics between blacks of a Creole heritage and those of an Americanized heritage. The two major black political organizations that were started in the mid-1960s reflected the split: COUP for Creoles, SOUL for other blacks. Landrieu had to be careful to compensate each group equally for its support, and thus as resources started flowing into the black community, they were fractured along ethnic lines. This bifurcation within the political arena is also reflected within the social arena, and thus the black community comes together in reaction to events, such as a white candidate running against a black one (as with Morial in the 1977 and 1982 and Barthelemy in 1990), but not in being as proactive to events around them as they might be. For instance, when Jefferson (with SOUL's backing) ran against

Barthelemy (with COUP's backing) in 1986, there was no black group to suggest that they not run against each other, for each was representing a different part of the community. Resources are thus diluted and blacks find it that much harder to speak with a united voice to the governing coalition.

### **Conclusion: Toward A Theoretically Reconstructed Urban Regime Theory**

A theoretically reconstructed urban regime theory must begin by interpreting the specifics of urban regimes in the context of higher-level theoretical abstractions. In our case, we find Clark and Dear's (1984) abstractions focusing on the state apparatus particularly useful, for they provide for insightful interpretation without a priori determinism. The state apparatus refers to a complex of mechanisms through which state power is exercised. According to Clark and Dear (1984:43), the operationalized objectives of the state are: 1) to secure social consensus; 2) to secure the conditions of production; and 3) to secure social integration, especially of the subordinate classes. They develop a taxonomy of the state apparatus based on sub-apparatuses determined by the "collection of agencies, organizations, and institutions which constitute the means by which (specific) state functions are attained" (1984:49). They locate the local state (governing coalition) as part of the consensus seeking political sub-apparatus of the state. The problem with this conceptualization is that while it allows for connections at the abstract level, it is not useful in making the sought-after but elusive connections between higher-level abstractions and empirical reality (see Lauria, 1985 for a critical review of this interpretive framework). On the one hand, contrary to Cox (1991a,b), this is precisely where we find the "new urban politics" literature so useful. But at the same time, we agree with Cox that this literature suffers from not

making **explicit** connections to the higher-level abstractions found in the "political economy of the state" literature.

As stated in the introduction, we see as a telling weakness in Stone's urban regime typology its undertheorization in terms of the relationships between the structure of the electoral coalition, the structure of the governing coalition (both public and private), and the stability of the regime. This is particularly apparent since regime theory has yet to specify the role of racial politics in governing coalitions that maintain urban regimes.<sup>9</sup> This is not a minor omission, for the black electorate will have an increasing role in urban politics for the expected future. Our case study is illustrative. At different times, New Orleans has seemed to be each of the three regime types delineated by Stone. Certainly, through much of its history, New Orleans politics were dominated by a caretaker regime.<sup>10</sup> The period from the 1930s to 1970 can be broadly characterized as a caretaker regime, with the exception of a brief reformist thrust in the early years of the Morrison administration (the late 1940s) (see Harris, 1974).

Occasionally, there has been some evidence of progressive forces in New Orleans. Most notably, this happened when preservationists and neighborhood groups banded together to stop the construction of the Riverfront Expressway in the 1960s. Although to some degree, the early years of the Morial administration can be viewed as a progressive regime, the 1970s and early 1980s saw a different sort of regime emerging. The reigning electoral coalition during the Landrieu and Morial administration was that of the overwhelming majority of black voters, and a minority of white voters. The ironic aspect of the black electorate is that it has a tendency to support either a progressive regime or a corporate regime: a caretaker regime is very difficult to maintain in a city with a recent majority black electorate. The progressive regime historically courted the black electorate symbolically, ideologically, and through redistributive policies.

Given the intensification of the fiscal crisis of the state, the prospects of jobs and minority contracts within a pro-growth strategy have become more seductive. This changing structure of the electorate and changing political patronage system helped pave the way for the emergence of a corporate regime. Ultimately, mayors Landrieu and Morial pursued policies which also headed the city towards a corporate regime. Following Reed (1988), "really existing" black urban governments adhere to a corporatist/pro-growth framework for the same reasons that white-dominated ones have. According to Reed,

it seems reasonable and proper ideologically, conforms to a familiar sense of rationality, and promises to deliver practical, empirical benefits....the interests to which the regime is most attentive are included among the framework's beneficiaries....They are by and large only black versions of the progrowth regimes that they have replaced, distinguished in part by the asymmetry of their campaign rhetoric and their practice of governance. They are in one sense even more attractive as junior members in the progrowth coalition because of their peculiar skill at derailing opposition to development initiatives and cultivating the loyalty or acquiescence of the growth machine's victims (1988).

The election of Sidney Barthelemy in 1986 brought a different political coalition to City Hall. Barthelemy was elected by a minority of black voters, and an overwhelming majority of white voters. By and large, this electoral coalition is reminiscent of the caretaker regime of earlier years. Many of his white supporters may have wanted low taxes and low levels of government activity. But the low level of activity at City Hall opened the door for the growing corporate leadership and the development entrepreneurs to play a more explicit role in strengthening a pro-growth coalition. Since blacks were mainly concerned with the rewards of city government -- patronage positions, contracts, etc. -- they were co-opted into becoming willing participants in the electoral coalition through Barthelemy's adroit handling of their concerns. By the time of his re-election in 1990 (against a white opponent), Barthelemy won with 86 percent of the black vote and 23 percent of the white vote (see Whelan and Young, 1992, p. 142).

Urban regime theory, and typologies in general, are by their conception static and thus not helpful in explicating transitions within the larger schema, or in our case the emergence of new regime. It is our contention that for a corporate regime to emerge (either from a progressive or caretaker one), it must rely on the development of consensus seeking para-apparatuses concerned with economic development to gain political strength. In recent years, business-dominated groups (especially the Business Council) have tried to transform the New Orleans governing coalition into a vigorous corporate regime. The creation of the Business Council and its offshoot, the Council for Fiscal Reform (see Miron, 1992), marks a transformation in the role of large mobile capital in the New Orleans governing coalition. The first two chairmen of the Business Council are major corporate CEOs. The Business Council has been aided in its efforts by several dynamic development entrepreneurs in quasi-public agencies with some autonomy, who share its aims.

The leaders of these consensus seeking para-apparatuses all exemplify innovative development entrepreneurs. Like their counterparts in other communities (Times-Picayune, July 15, 1987, p. 1; Times-Picayune, May 18, 1986, p. A-1) they are activists who would like to see a corporate regime dominate in New Orleans. They want the kinds of achievements in tourism, the port, and economic development that other communities have demonstrated.

In contrast, the heads of the city's functional bureaucracies have not shown the same kind of entrepreneurial leadership. By and large, in a time of fiscal scarcity, the heads of city departments have been reactive. In considering the land use alliance, it is noteworthy that the City Planning Commission has been rather compliant in recent years on development issues (see case studies in Doig and Hargrove, 1987; Doig, 1987; and Caro, 1974 for counter examples). On a number of controversial matters (e.g., the siting of the new aquarium on the French Quarter

waterfront, expansion on the French Quarter riverfront), the commission has sided with developers instead of environmentalists and preservationists who opposed the scope of the site of the development.<sup>11</sup>

The new business leadership coalition dovetails well with Barthelemy's vision of the role of city government. Although Barthelemy believes that economic development planning and initiatives should come from the private sector, a problem arises when public action is necessary to support private development. This is especially the case when the approval of voters is required. Then the active involvement of the political leader is needed in order to galvanize the voters through promises of benefits to come. In the process, the governing regime moves toward a more corporate orientation.

In conclusion, what have we added to urban regime theory? First we have embedded it, for interpretation and specification purposes, within the framework of higher-level abstractions concerning the form, function, and mechanisms of the state in a capitalist social formation. This aided us in explicating the emergence of a corporate regime in New Orleans. It helped us understand the role of quasi-public development agencies as consensus seeking para-apparatuses of the newly emerging corporate governing coalition. At the same time, it highlights the political role, in contrast to the more explicit economic role, these organizations have within the new regime. Second, we have argued that the changing structure of an electoral coalition has much to say about the likely stability of a governing regime. In our case, we focused on racial politics and the development of a majority black electorate. While we argue that the complexity of racial politics in New Orleans leads to perplexing political coalitions based on specific heritage and class, we also argue that it is difficult for a caretaker regime to maintain the support of a black electorate. Given the historical legacy of the black population in the United States in



general and New Orleans in particular, the overwhelming majority of the black population are low-income renters. This is not likely to be a stable political base of a caretaker regime. While it can be the political base of a progressive regime, and was in many urban areas during the influx of federal dollars, given the fiscal crisis of the state at all levels of government, it is more likely that the black electorate can be seduced with promises of trickle-down jobs fostered by a corporate-led pro-growth coalition. At the same time, such a governing coalition is politically and economically attractive to the small but influential black middle class. This is what we see happening in New Orleans in the 1990s.

## Endnotes

1. This is not a criticism; Cox has been active in these debates and has researched at the nexus of the new urban politics and locality studies (see Cox and Mair 1988, 1989a,b). It is interesting to note that the new locality and regional focus in geography and the new urban politics in political science were generated, at least explicitly, in reaction to what some believe to have been a scientific imperial threat from economics represented by the rise of political economic perspectives in both disciplines (from both Marxian and/or Chicago School roots). There are countless examples of disciplinary scholars in essence proclaiming that "see we are an important discipline; **politics** (or read **geography**) matters."
2. From their rejoinders, it appears that Stone (1991) and Fainstein (1991) agree with Cox on this point; where they appear to disagree is with his realist epistemology (after Sayer, 1984) and Marxian rooted theoretical predisposition represented here.
3. During Landrieu's term in office, a number of political offices were won by blacks, all of whom were Landrieu allies and their victories were a direct result of his backing. In 1972 Robert Collins became the first black federal judge in the "Deep South" Eastern District. In 1973, Edwin Lombard was elected Clerk of Court, the first black parochial (parish-wide) official since Reconstruction. In 1974 Sidney Barthelemy became the first black state senator elected in a century. In 1976 Rev. A.L. Davis became the first black city councilman when the other councilmen at Landrieu's urging named him to an unexpired term. The next year, Sidney Barthelemy became the first black city councilman-at-large. James Singleton beat Davis for a seat as a district councilman.
4. The seven-member City Council did not become majority black until 1985, when Babovich was forced to resign and Ulysses Williams was named in his place. In 1986 the Council had an elected black majority.
5. During Morial's administration, from the time the executive orders on set-asides went into effect in September 1984 to April 1986, the amount of contracts awarded to minorities include: construction, \$13.4 million; personal and professional services, \$1.6 million; and set-asides, \$2.1 million (Rice, 1986). During Barthelemy's term, from April 1986 to September 1988, the amount of contracts awarded to minorities include: construction \$31 million; professional services, \$20 million, and set-asides, \$16.5 million (Office of Minority Business Development City of New Orleans).
6. Jefferson ran in 1982 because he felt that Morial was vulnerable in both the black and white communities. There was a large pocket of black dissatisfaction, especially following the killing of three blacks by police officers in the Algiers neighborhood, and the fact that black political organizations felt that they were being ignored by Morial (Jefferson had strong ties with the leaders of SOUL). Therefore, Jefferson calculated that he could get a significant amount of the black vote. Jefferson also felt he could get white support, since he had won a large number of white votes in his successful campaign against a 16-year incumbent for his Senate seat. Jefferson's calculations may have been naive to begin with, assuming he could

beat the city's first black mayor. However, when Ron Faucheaux, a white candidate, entered the race, Jefferson's strategy went awry. The blacks stayed with Morial, to make sure that Faucheaux did not win, and the whites went with Faucheaux. Jefferson lost with only 7 percent of the vote.

7. With 51.2 percent of the electorate black, the results of the 1986 mayoral election suggest that the white vote played the same role that the black vote played in the 1960s and 1970s, when it was the minority component of the electorate. Black voter turnout was relatively low in 1986. When blacks are faced with two viable candidates, they often turn out in lower numbers, since some refuse to choose between the two.
8. A federal audit of the airport's contracts completed in May 1989 was critical of the non-competitive process used by the Aviation Board in awarding professional services contracts. These contracts, worth millions of dollars annually, tend to go to friends and political supporters of Barthelemy and city council members (Times-Picayune, May 5, 1989, p.B-3).
9. Interestingly and fortunately, Stone's failure to theorize racial politics is not reflected in his insightful analysis (see his analysis of Atlanta's urban regime in Stone, 1989:183-199).
10. In an earlier paper on development policies in New Orleans, Whelan (1987) employed the regime concept. During the years from the second World War until 1970, New Orleans politics followed Elkin's characterization of a "privatist regime." The city became involved in numerous federal programs, and blacks attained significant employment in city government for the first time (See Perry and Stokes, 1987). The Morial administration (1978-1986) seems somewhat akin to Elkin's description of a "federalist regime." The city achieved substantial results in economic development by employing federal monies. At the same time, the city became increasingly dependent on the federal government. Blacks became the dominant partner in the electoral coalition. In the earlier paper (written at the start of the Barthelemy administration), the years after 1986 were called a "post-federalism regime." In a review of this paper John Kincaid notes that these regimes are all keyed to mayoral elections. Kincaid also observes that there is not "clear specification of criteria for demarcating regimes" (Kincaid, 1988). Whelan would not use these categories now, preferring Stone's typology of corporate, progressive, and caretaker.
11. The head of the City Planning Commission resigned in 1988 to take a position with the Audubon Institute. The City Planning Commission is now headed by a black for the first time in its history.

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