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MIAMI'S METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

by RAYMOND A. MOHL

IN the past several years, the Miami metropolitan area has experienced fast-paced, almost frantic, urban change. The Liberty City and Overtown race riots of 1980 and 1982, Haitian-Cuban refugee problems, high rates of violent crime and murder, and a lucrative drug smuggling trade have all kept Miami in the national news. A new and dynamic urban economy based on international banking, foreign investment, and a prosperous Latin American-Caribbean trade has insulated Miami from the national economic recession. Indeed, during the past decade, Miami has been transformed into the trade and cultural capital of the Caribbean basin. New skyscraper construction in downtown Miami and mushrooming residential development all across the urban periphery symbolize the rising star of Miami in the Sunbelt constellation.¹ Passing virtually unnoticed amidst the rapid growth and change of the early 1980s was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Miami's innovative metropolitan government.

In July 1957, a county-wide metropolitan government began functioning in Dade County. The nation's first metropolitan government, "Metro" was the result of an organized campaign by "good government" reformers dating back to 1945. Although buffeted by localist opponents for two and one-half decades,

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1. On recent developments in Miami, see Manning Marable, "The Fire This Time: The Miami Rebellion, May, 1980," *The Black Scholar*, XI (July-August 1980), 2-18; Robert L. Bach, "The New Cuban Immigrants: Their Background and Prospects," *Monthly Labor Review*, CIII (October 1980), 39-46; Thomas D. Boswell, "In the Eye of the Storm: The Context of Haitian Migration to Miami, Florida," *Southeastern Geographer*, XXIII (November 1983), 57-77; Raymond A. Mohl, "Changing Economic Patterns in the Miami Metropolitan Area, 1940-1980," *Tequesta*, XLII (1982), 63-73; Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston, 1981), 167-206; Jim Kelly, "Trouble in Paradise," *Time* (November 23, 1981), 22-32; Andrew Neil, "America's Latin Beat: A Survey of South Florida," *The Economist*, CCLXXXV (October 16, 1982), 1-26.

Miami's Metro government gradually expanded its power and functions at the expense of the county's twenty-seven fragmented municipalities (see Table 1). By the 1980s, however, the emergence of divisive ethnic politics in Dade County had begun to raise new questions about the structure and representativeness of Metro.

The idea of a consolidated urban government for Dade County grew out of the conditions of the 1930s and 1940s. Until the mid-twenties, the city of Miami expanded its boundaries rapidly, encompassing some forty-three square miles of land by 1925. However, Miami's last annexation took place in 1925 during the height of the great real estate boom. During that period of expansion and speculative development, Miami incurred a high level of bonded indebtedness for roads, bridges, schools, utilities, drainage facilities, and other services. Collapse of the boom, soon followed by the Great Depression, brought financial disaster to Miami's municipal finances. By the early thirties, debt service was costing the city thirty-one per cent of its total budget, and in July 1932 the city defaulted on interest payments. Unable to carry through its ambitious program of urban development, Miami de-annexed some territory in 1931, reducing the city's size to thirty-four square miles of land. Services were cut back and programs of municipal development abandoned. Property assessments rose somewhat in the late thirties, providing additional city income and permitting a reduction of Miami's bonded indebtedness, but the city's financial position remained relatively weak.²

As a result of financial weakness, Miami's city government faced severe problems in sustaining services and improvements within its own boundaries. Even as late as the 1950s, according to one economist, Miami's city government continued to experience severe financial constraints: "The city was unable to cope with the growing needs for hospital facilities, to modernize its waterfront, to alleviate the unbearable traffic blocks at the river crossings by new bridges or water tunnels, to expand its fire protection system, build adequate facilities for police and courts, provide for intra-city transit and create public parking facilities. Its attempts at slum clearance and urban renewal were almost

2. Reinhold P. Wolff, *Miami Metro: The Road to Urban Unity* (Coral Gables, 1960), 411-54.

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TABLE 1
POPULATION OF MIAMI SMSA, 1940-1980

Municipality	Date Incorporated	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Miami	1896	172,172	249,276	291,688	334,859	346,931
Homestead	1913	3,154	4,573	9,152	13,674	20,668
Florida City	1914	752	1,547	4,114	5,133	6,174
Miami Beach	1915	28,012	46,282	63,145	87,072	96,298
Coral Gables	1925	8,294	19,837	34,793	42,494	43,241
Hialeah	1925	3,958	19,676	66,972	102,452	145,254
Opa-locka	1926	497	5,271	9,810	11,902	14,460
Miami Springs	1926	898	5,108	11,229	13,279	12,350
South Miami	1926	2,408	4,809	9,846	11,780	10,884
North Miami	1927	1,973	10,734	28,708	34,767	42,566
Golden Beach	1928	83	156	413	849	612
North Miami Beach	1931	871	2,129	21,405	30,544	36,481
Miami Shores	1931	1,956	5,086	8,865	9,425	9,244
Biscayne Park	1932	500	2,009	2,911	2,717	3,088
Surfside	1935	295	1,852	3,157	3,614	3,763
El Portal	1937	365	1,371	2,079	2,068	1,819
Indian Creek Village	1939		44	60	82	103
Sweetwater	1941		230	645	3,357	8,251
North Bay Village	1945		198	2,006	4,831	4,920
Bal Harbour	1946		224	727	2,038	2,575
Bay Harbor Islands	1946		296	3,249	4,619	4,869
West Miami	1947		4,043	5,296	5,494	6,076
Virginia Gardens	1947		235	2,159	2,524	1,742
Hialeah Gardens	1948			172	492	2,700
Medley	1949		106	112	351	537
Pennsuco	1949		133	117	74	15

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Municipality	Date Incorporated	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Islandia Unincorporated	1961	41,551	109,859	352,217	537,293 ⁸	800,346 ¹²
Total Miami SMSA (Dade County)		267,739	495,084	935,047	1,267,792	1,625,979

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, I, Number of Inhabitants* (Washington, 1942), 224-25; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population: 1950, I, Number of Inhabitants* (Washington, 1952), Section 10, 14-15; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population: 1970, I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 11, Florida, Section 1* (Washington, 1973), 15-16, 21, 28; U.S. Bureau of Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing, Advance Reports, PHC80-V-11, Florida, Final Population and Housing Unit Counts* (Washington, 1981), 5-6, 14-18.

complete failures. Only a small part of the city was provided with sanitary and storm sewers."³ Financially insecure, Miami could not afford to expand its boundaries or extend municipal services.

Meanwhile, the population of Dade County was growing at an unprecedented pace— 87.3 per cent during the 1930s, 84.9 per cent during the 1940s, and 88.9 per cent during the 1950s (Table 2). This vast population growth over just a few decades brought consequent demands for municipal services which Miami found difficulty in providing even within its own municipal boundaries. As one Miami lawyer put it in 1958, "each year it became increasingly obvious that something had to be done to meet problems attending this great growth in population other than awaiting solution by a legislature five hundred miles distant, sitting only sixty days every other year, and controlled by legislators elected from counties still predominantly rural in character."⁴ Under the circumstances, the existing county government began to provide a greater level of services, particularly in the rapidly expanding unincorporated area of Dade County. Indeed, as early as the 1930s, Miami's central city status had begun to wither, and local power was drifting from city to county.

This trend accelerated during World War II and in the immediate post-war years when a number of functional consolidations took place. In 1943, for instance, a county-wide public health department was created; in 1945, the Dade County Port Authority was established, bringing area airports and the principal seaport in Miami under county control. In the same year, state legislation consolidated ten separate Dade school districts into a single county-wide school system. In 1949, the city transferred Jackson Memorial Hospital, the area's major public health care facility, to Dade County. Nevertheless, because of the fragmented municipal structure of the county, most governmental functions and services, if provided at all, were administered by the twenty-six separate cities in the metropolitan area.⁵

3. *Ibid.*, 53.

4. Franklin Parson, *The Story of the First Metropolitan Government in the United States* (Winter Park, 1958), 1.

5. Gustave Serino, *Miami's Metropolitan Experiment* (Gainesville, 1958), 6-7; Edward Sofen, *The Miami Metropolitan Experiment* (New York, 1966), 17-26; James F. Horan and G. Thomas Taylor, Jr., *Experiments in Metropolitan Government* (New York, 1977), 91-92; Wolff, *Miami Metro*, 103-26.

TABLE 2
POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN MIAMI SMSA,
CENTRAL CITY AND SUBURBAN FRINGE, 1940-1980

	1940		1950			1960			1970			1980		
	Popula- tion	% of Total SMSA	Popula- tion	% of Total SMSA	% of In- crease	Popula- tion	% of Total SMSA	% of In- crease	Popula- tion	% of Total SMSA	% of In- crease	Popula- tion	% of Total SMSA	% of In- crease
Miami	172,172	64.3	249,276	50.3	44.8	291,688	31.2	17.0	334,859	26.4	14.8	346,931	21.3	3.6
Suburban Municipalities	54,016	20.3	135,949	27.5	151.7	291,142	31.1	114.2	395,640	31.2	35.9	478,702	29.5	21.0
Unincorporated Areas	41,551	15.5	109,859	22.2	164.4	352,217	37.7	220.6	537,293	42.4	52.5	800,346	49.2	48.9
Total Dade County	267,739	100.0	495,084	100.0	84.9	935,047	100.0	88.9	1,267,792	100.0	35.6	1,625,979	100.0	28.3

Sources: Same as for Table 1.

The functional consolidations of the 1940s created an awareness among local political reformers that county government might serve as the vehicle for a consolidated metropolitan government. The growing sentiment for such a government led in post-war years to three major efforts to merge various municipalities with Dade County. In 1945, a plan proposed by Miami Mayor Leonard K. Thompson to merge Miami and its suburban municipalities into a single county-wide metropolitan government died in the Florida legislature.⁶ In another consolidation effort in 1948, Dade County voters rejected a plan to merge the county with Miami and four small municipalities.⁷ A 1953 referendum on a proposal to abolish the city of Miami and transfer its functions to the county failed by a very small margin.⁸ Political battle lines hardened during each of these consolidation efforts, with opponents seeking to protect local power and control, and supporters asserting the efficiency and economy of a consolidated metropolitan government.

The narrow loss in the 1953 referendum encouraged supporters of consolidation to push ahead. Supported by the local press, civic groups, and the Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Miami City Commission created a twenty-member Metropolitan Miami Municipal Board (3M Board) to study the feasibility of consolidation. The 3M Board, in turn, hired a Chicago consulting firm, the Public Administration Service (PAS), to research and report on the issue.⁹ The report essentially recommended a two-tiered metropolitan government—a federated structure in which existing municipalities retained certain local services and a new metropolitan government took over designated area-wide functions such as planning, mass transit, recreation, water and sewage, and health and welfare.¹⁰ The 3M Board accepted the PAS recommendations, then successfully guided a Dade County

6. *Miami Herald*, March 4, 6, 11, 16, April 5, 1945.

7. Horan and Taylor, *Experiments in Metropolitan Government*, 92-93; Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 29-32.

8. *Miami Herald*, March 14, June 1, 8, 11, July 2, 1953; "Miamians to Vote on Abolishing City," *National Municipal Review*, XLII (June 1953), 290; "Miami Voters Reject Merger with County," *National Municipal Review*, XLII (July 1953), 347.

9. Serino, *Miami's Metropolitan Experiment*, 9-11; Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 36-41.

10. Public Administration Service, *The Government of Metropolitan Miami* (Chicago, 1954), 87-111.

home-rule provision through the state legislature and a state-wide referendum. The legislature also established a Metropolitan Charter Board to draft a new county charter. In May 1957, by a narrow margin, county voters ratified the plan.¹¹

The new charter built upon the recommendations of the PAS report. It established the two-tier governmental system which conferred broad powers on the new county-wide metropolitan government and left a number of local functions to the individual municipalities. The powers of Dade's Metro government included mass transit and expressway building, health and welfare programs, parks and recreation, housing and urban renewal, air pollution control, beach erosion control, flood and drainage control, industrial promotion, water supply regulation, sewage and solid waste disposal regulation, libraries, uniform building codes, assessing and collecting taxes, comprehensive development plans, service provision in the unincorporated areas, and the setting of minimum standards for all governmental units in the county. The individual municipalities retained fire and police protection, regulation of taxes and alcoholic beverage sale, and the ability to exceed minimum county standards in zoning. No municipalities could be created, nor could existing municipalities make new annexations, without county approval. The new Metro government was headed by an eleven-member, non-partisan board of commissioners, some elected at-large and others by district for four-year terms (the commission was later expanded to thirteen and then reduced in 1963 to nine members elected at-large). One of the commissioners served as a figurehead mayor, but the chief administrator was a county manager, who served at the pleasure of the commission.¹² In July 1957, when the new charter went into effect, Miami acquired the nation's first metropolitan government.

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11. "Dade County Home Rule Bill Approved," *National Municipal Review*, XLIV (July 1955), 374-75; Wendell G. Schaeffer, "Miami Looks at the Problems of Metropolitan Government," *Public Administration Review*, XV (Winter 1955), 35-38; "Greater Miami Gets Chance to Pioneer Area-wide Government," *Business Week* (November 17, 1956), 176-81; Harry T. Toulmin, "Charter Ratified in Dade County," *National Municipal Review*, XLVI (June 1957), 305-07; "Dade County and Miami Try Metropolitan Government," *Metropolitan Area Problems*, I (October-November 1957), 2.
 12. Harry T. Toulmin, "First Metropolitan Government Created," *Public Management*, XXXIX (July 1957), 151-53; Don Larsen, "Planning in Metropolitan Government," in *Planning 1958: Selected Papers from the*

In some ways, Dade's new Metro government represented a compromise between the "consolidationists" and the "localists." Consolidationists promoted abolition of the separate municipalities and the creation of a single super-government. By contrast, the localists sought to retain power at the municipal level, opposed the Metro idea, and fought to destroy it once it became a reality.

Good government reformers who supported Metro included Miami business and professional leaders, civic groups like the League of Women Voters, the *Miami Herald* and the *Miami News*, and the Dade County legislative delegation. Given the earlier failures to achieve consolidation, pro-Metro advocates pushed the federated, two-tiered approach as the only realistic means of getting an area-wide government for the Miami metropolitan region. They focused on the inadequacies of the existing municipal structure and emphasized the efficiency, tax savings, and better service which metropolitan government would bring. Although not the single, centralized super-government many consolidationists wanted, Metro government possessed broad and sweeping powers which cut across municipal boundaries and permitted a unified approach to area-wide problems.¹³

Defeated in the crucial 1957 referendum, the localists immediately began a sustained attack on the Metro government. Political scientist Edward Sofen identified the localists as the officials and employees of the individual municipalities (who feared loss of power and jobs), the Dade County League of Municipalities, several suburban newspapers, and various business and citizens groups in the smaller cities.¹⁴

National Planning Conference, Washington, D. C., May 18-22, 1958 (Chicago, 1958), 158-62; Gladys M. Kammerer, *The Changing Urban County* (Gainesville, 1963), 10-13; Aileen Lotz, "Metropolitan Dade County," in *Regional Governance: Promise and Performance* (Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Substate Regionalism and the Federal Government*, 5 vols., Washington, 1973), II, 6-16.

13. Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 9-10, 74-91; O. W. Campbell, "Progress Report on Metropolitan Miami," *Public Management*, XLI (April 1959), 85-89; Harry T. Toulmin, "Metro and the Voters," in *Planning 1959: Selected Papers from the 25th Anniversary National Planning Conference, Minneapolis, May 10-14, 1959* (Chicago, 1959), 63-69. For a comparative study of metropolitan government campaigns in Miami, Cleveland, and St. Louis, see Scott Greer, *Metropolitics: A Study of Political Culture* (New York, 1963), and Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970* (Baltimore, 1979), 175-82.
14. Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 8; "Metro Faces Severe Test in

The attack on Metro took several forms. Many of the municipalities refused to cooperate with the new county government, and local political conflict became the order of the day. The localists also resorted to the courts, and by 1961 they had filed some 600 law suits challenging Metro authority. Miami Beach, for instance, took its case for retaining a separate traffic court all the way to the United States Supreme Court, but lost. As a result of its hostility to the new system, Miami Beach, along with the neighboring municipalities of Surfside, Golden Beach, Bal Harbour, and North Bay Village, tried to secede from Dade County in 1960, but without success. Miami Beach, which had adequate tax revenues and excellent municipal services, "resisted Metro to the bitter end."¹⁵

Localists also fought Metro by trying to dilute or undermine its power through amendments to the county charter. One such proposed amendment in 1958 would have restored autonomy to the municipalities, effectively nullifying metropolitan government. This autonomy amendment lost in a county-wide referendum, but the localists did not give up.¹⁶ Another serious anti-Metro challenge occurred in 1961, when a proposed amendment would have introduced thirty-seven changes in the charter, including abolition of the council-manager form of government and termination of Metro control of such county-wide functions as water supply, sewage, transportation, and planning. Dade voters also rejected this amendment, but in later years passed others curbing the county manager's broad powers.¹⁷

Dade County," *Metropolitan Area Problems*, I (December 1957-January 1958), 1, 4.

15. "Dade County Vote Pending Supreme Court Decision," *Metropolitan Area Problems*, I (February-March 1958), 5; *Miami Herald*, October 27, 1960; "Reprieve for Metro," *The Economist*, CCI (October 28, 1961), 336-38; Joseph Metzger, "Metro and Its Judicial History," *University of Miami Law Review*, XV (Spring 1961), 283-93; Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 173-74.
16. "Dade County Referendum Upholds Miami Metro," *Metropolitan Area Problems*, I (September-October 1958), 1, 5; "Dade Co. Metro Charter Upheld," *National Municipal Review*, XLVII (November 1958), 515-16.
17. Thomas J. Wood, "Dade Charter Survives Test," *National Civic Review*, L (December 1961), 609-11; Irving G. McNayr, "All Pulling Together," *National Civic Review*, LI (March 1962), 135-38; Thomas J. Wood, "Basic Revisions in Dade Charter," *National Civic Review*, LIII (January 1964), 39-41; "New York, Florida Voters Pass Amendments," *Metropolitan Area Problems*, VI (November-December 1963), 1-2; John C. Bollens and Henry J. Schmandt, *The Metropolis: Its People, Politics, and Economic Life* (New York, 1965), 463-66.

Even some Metro advocates eventually became unhappy with what they had created. By the late 1960s, good government reformers began circulating petitions for a charter amendment eliminating the council-manager plan in favor of the strong mayor system. In 1970, John DeGrove published a report supporting stronger mayoral powers, hoping "to marry the best features of the strong mayor and council-manager plans."¹⁸ A charter revision commission in 1971 recommended a strong mayor plan, but voters rejected the idea in a 1972 referendum. In 1981, another charter revision commission revived the strong mayor plan in modified form.¹⁹

Political controversy has surrounded Miami's Metro government from the very beginning. Some supporters pushed for the unification of the county's twenty-seven cities and the unincorporated area into a single city. Others urged that all unincorporated territory be annexed to the ten or so major municipalities. Still others sought to merge the city of Miami with Metro.²⁰ Metro's first two county managers were forced out of office: one for pursuing consolidation too aggressively, and the other for being too conciliatory toward the municipalities.²¹ The expected tax savings promised by Metro advocates never materialized, and increased property tax assessments to pay for expanded services alienated many county voters. The tax matter was especially important, since the expectation of lower taxes, perhaps more than any other issue, helped swing Dade County voters in favor of the 1957 Metro charter. Throughout the 1960s and after, taxa-

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18. John DeGrove, "Metropolitan Dade County: The Unfinished Experiment," *Florida Planning and Development*, XXI (July-August 1970), 5-6.
 19. For the 1971 charter revision effort, see Metropolitan Dade County, *Report and Recommendations of the Dade County Metropolitan Study Commission* (Miami, 1971); "Dade Co. Voters Reject Amendment," *National Civic Review*, LXI (May 1972), 254; "Strong Mayor Plan Defeated in Dade," *National Civic Review*, XLI (June 1972), 303. On the 1982 charter revision debate, see Dade County Charter Review Commission, *Interim Report* (Miami, 1982); "Dade County Reviews Charter," *National Civic Review*, VII (May 1982), 265-66.
 20. Irving G. McNayr, "Recommendations for Unified Government in Dade County," in Joseph F. Zimmerman, ed., *Government of the Metropolis* (New York, 1968), 191-99; DeGrove, "Metropolitan Dade County," 5.
 21. "Another Crisis for Metro," *Business Week* (February 18, 1961), 102; "Blow at Miami's Metro," *Business Week* (September 1, 1962), 92; Thomas J. Wood, "Dade Commission Dismisses a Manager," *National Civic Review*, LIII (October 1964), 498-99; Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 243-52.

tion, planning, land use, and development policies stirred great controversy.²²

Localists continued the attack on Metro through the 1960s. Typically, in a statement before the National Commission on Urban Problems in 1967, former North Miami Mayor Arthur Snyder criticized the Metro idea as an undemocratic usurpation of local autonomy. "You are taking away government by the people on its lowest grass-roots level," Snyder contended, and thus Miami's Metro was "doomed to failure." Metro manager Porter Homer countered Snyder at the commission hearings, defending the Metro experiment as a regional approach to urban problems: "There can be no solution to the urban problem without a complete and heavy involvement of suburbia. . . . Without a governmental apparatus and structure which mandates the involvement of the suburban areas in our urban problems we are bound to fail."²³ Ten years after the introduction of Metro, controversy continued to impede the development of metropolitan government in Miami. As one study noted, "Miami Metro provides an example of how metropolitan government can breed extended conflict, even where it is successfully implemented."²⁴

But while political conflict between Metro and the municipalities continued, Metro consolidated its powers and began to provide indispensable services. As early as 1965, for instance, Dan Paul, a Miami attorney who had played a key role in writing the Metro charter, expressed surprise "that so much has been accomplished" despite localist opposition. He emphasized especially Metro's achievements in expressway building and mass transit improvements, modernized law enforcement procedures, countywide development and land use planning, a uniform building code, strict pollution controls, efficient budgetary practices, vastly improved social services, and the streamlined administration of urban government.²⁵ Metro had lost some battles,

22. Lotz, "Metropolitan Dade County," 11-12; Robert L. Bish, *The Public Economy of Metropolitan Areas* (Chicago, 1971), 94-103; Richard D. Gustely, "The Allocation and Distributional Impacts of Governmental Consolidation: The Dade County Experience," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, XII (March 1977), 349-64.

23. *Hearings Before the National Commission on Urban Problems*, 5 vols. (Washington, July-August 1967), III, 297-304.

24. Horan and Taylor, *Experiments in Metropolitan Government*, 99.

25. D. P. S. Paul, "Metropolitan Dade County Government: A Review of Accomplishments," in Zimmerman, ed., *Government of the Metropolis*, 200-07.

one writer suggested in 1965, "but it seems to have won the war."²⁶ By the end of the 1970s, according to a recent analysis, Metro enjoyed "general acceptance, or at least tolerance, both in the cities and in the unincorporated area." Proposed changes in the Metro charter are no longer "challenges to the supremacy of countywide government," but rather "adaptations to the times."²⁷

The Miami metropolitan area has changed considerably since the initiation of Metro government, particularly in the racial and ethnic composition of the population (Table 3). With the civil rights movement and the large-scale registration of black voters, Miami's blacks became an important political force in the late 1960s and 1970s. The arrival of several hundred thousand Cuban refugees after 1959 has also brought irreversible change to Dade County. At first most Cuban newcomers hoped to return to their homeland, but by the 1970s most had given up that dream and pursued success in America instead. As the Cubans became American citizens, they too began to acquire and exercise political power. By 1984, even the Haitians— the most recent newcomers— had begun to register as voters and to organize politically.²⁸

Finally, the continued rapid population growth of the Miami metropolitan area, particularly on the unincorporated fringes of the county, resulted in new political realities. In 1950, only twenty-two per cent of Dade County's population resided in unincorporated territory, but by 1980 some 800,000 people, or just about half of the county's population, lived outside of any municipality (Table 2). For these Miamians, Metro is the only local government, and the unincorporated portion of Dade County is larger than any city in Florida.

These changes have altered significantly the balance of metropolitan political power. Black and Cuban voters have begun to play a decisive role in some local elections, often determining the outcome. Cubans are politically powerful in Miami, Hialeah, and such small cities as Sweetwater and West Miami. Blacks control the government of Opalocka and have had a decisive impact in Miami city elections in 1981 and 1983.²⁹

26. Edward C. Banfield, *Big City Politics* (New York, 1965), 106.

27. Juanita Greene, "Dade Metro: Turbulent History, Uncertain Future," *Planning*, XLV (February 1979), 16.

28. *Miami Herald*, January 31, 1984.

29. On Cubans in Miami politics, see Paul S. Salter and Robert C. Mings,

TABLE 3
COMPOSITION OF POPULATION OF MIAMI SMSA,
1940-1980

	1940		1950		1960		1970		1980	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Population	267,739	100.0	495,084	100.0	935,047	100.0	1,267,792	100.0	1,625,979	100.0
White	217,909	81.4	429,692	86.8	796,054	85.0	1,071,662	84.5	1,262,518	77.7
Black	49,518	18.5	64,947	13.1	137,299	14.7	189,666	15.0	280,379	17.2
Hispanic*	NA	-	20,000	4.0	50,000	5.3	299,217	23.6	581,030	35.7
Other Races	312	.1	445	.1	1,694	.2	6,464	.5	83,082	5.1

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, II, Characteristics of the Population, Part 2* (Washington, 1943), 50; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population: 1950, II, Characteristics of the Population, Part 10, Florida* (Washington, 1952), 56; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population: 1960, I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 11, Florida* (Washington, 1963), 106; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population: 1970, I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 11, Florida, Section 1* (Washington, 1973), 78; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population: 1970, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Final Report PC (1)-C11, Florida* (Washington, 1972), 335; U.S. Bureau of Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing, Advance Reports, PHC80-V-11, Florida, Final Population and Housing Unit Counts* (Washington, 1981), 5. Hispanic totals for 1950 and 1960 are estimates taken from "Housing Plan, Miami Metropolitan Area" (Metropolitan Dade County Planning Department, March 1978), 6.

*Hispanic is not a race category. Totals for Hispanic are included in white and black categories.

Yet because the Metro Commission is elected by county-wide vote, the power of the ethnic blocs is considerably diluted. As of 1984, blacks have been able to fill through election only one seat on the commission; Hispanics elected their first commissioner in 1982. Spokesmen in both the black and Hispanic communities are challenging the existing structural arrangements which have long made Metro government the exclusive domain of Miami's white power elite.

Similarly, the rising population of the unincorporated area has eclipsed the power of the existing cities and municipalities. Earlier conflicts over Metro government pitted the reformer-consolidationists against the localist politicians and the small cities which resisted county-wide government. In the 1970s and 1980s, the political conflict has taken on new and somewhat different dimensions. Consolidationists and Metro supporters are now fighting off local interest groups such as the Kendall Federation of Homeowners Associations, the New City Political Action Committee, and the Spanish-American League Against Discrimination— groups which generally accept the idea of metropolitan government but want a larger share or a redistribution of decision-making power. These local interest groups are often organized by race or ethnicity or neighborhood. The central city-suburban conflicts of the 1950s and 1960s have yielded in the 1970s and 1980s to a new kind of spatial politics— an urban territoriality in which municipal boundaries have little importance.³⁰ Indeed, the 1980s promise to be a decade of ethnic and spatial politics in Miami and in metropolitan areas throughout the United States. Recent conflicts in the Miami area, particularly over the issue of Metro charter revision, have revealed the essential outlines of these politics of the future.

"The Projected Impact of Cuban Settlement on Voting Patterns in Metropolitan Miami, Florida," *Professional Geographer*, XXIV (May 1972), 123-31, and Kathy A. Darasz, "Cuban Refugees in Miami: Patterns of Economic and Political Adjustment" (master's thesis, Florida Atlantic University, 1982). On black voting power, see *Miami News*, February 9, 1981; *Miami Herald*, September 12, 1982; *Miami Times*, November 12, 1981, November 17, 1983.

30. For an analysis of this pattern nationwide, see Carl Abbott, *The New Urban America: Growth and Politics in Sunbelt Cities* (Chapel Hill, 1981), 13-14, 182-240. Also suggestive are Kevin Phillips, "The Balkanization of America," *Harper's*, CCLVI (May 1978), 37-47, and Theodore H. White, "New Powers, New Politics," *New York Times Magazine* (February 5, 1984), 2-28, 32-34, 50-51.

One of the persistently controversial Metro issues has been the number and method of election of the Metro commissioners. According to Franklin Parson, one of the drafters of the Metro charter, "A great amount of time was consumed [by the original Metropolitan Charter Board] deciding whether . . . the commission should be elected at large or by districts." In addition, Parson has noted, the size of the commission "was deliberated with great intensity." On both issues, "the final decision was a compromise."³¹ As noted earlier, the original charter called for eleven commissioners: five elected at large, five elected from districts, and one from each city of over 60,000 population. At first, only Miami qualified for a commissioner on the basis of population. But after the 1960 census, both Miami Beach and Hialeah qualified and selected Metro commissioners, thus increasing the commission's size to thirteen.

The controversy over the Metro Commission continued into the 1960s. A 1962 Charter Review Board recommended a charter amendment reducing the Metro Commission to nine members elected at-large. The commission rejected this recommendation, but in 1963 permitted a county referendum on a slightly different amendment— a nine-member commission, eight residing in newly-established districts and the ninth, the mayor, who might reside anywhere in the county. All nine commissioners would be elected at-large. The voters approved this charter change, and the new commission took office in February 1964.³²

The debate over the make-up and method of election of the commission reflects one of the classic controversies in local government. Supporters of the district method of election contend that this procedure permits a greater degree of representativeness, that it gives the voters a greater sense of participating in their government, and that it is more democratic. At the same time, depending on the size of the individual districts, it makes possible the election of candidates from ethnic and minority groups which tend to be residentially concentrated in certain sections of the metropolitan area.

Advocates of the at-large method of election, by contrast, argue that the district system encourages a kind of particularistic politics in which elected representatives look out for their local

31. Parson, *Story of the First Metropolitan Government*, 5.

32. Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 194-97, 202-07.

constituents, but tend to disregard the interests of the whole community. At-large proponents prefer smaller elected councils with a city-wide outlook as a more efficient and decisive body less influenced by the shifting tides of local politics. These kinds of conflicts began to emerge during the municipal reform campaigns of the Progressive Era.³³ Clearly, they are still with us today. The original Metro charter was a compromise between the two opposing positions, but the 1963 charter amendment represented a victory for the at-large method and, according to most analysts, for the consolidationists who sought to undermine the political clout of localist opponents.³⁴

Although victorious in 1963, the supporters of the at-large election system have been fighting a rear-guard action ever since. A second Charter Revision Commission, which deliberated during 1970 and 1971, confronted the at-large or district issue, among others. In 1971, the commission urged the establishment of a strong mayor system, which would have eliminated the Metro manager as the county's chief executive officer. It also recommended other changes, including the creation of "service districts" to provide a true two-tier government in the unincorporated areas. But the most significant recommendation was to scrap the at-large election system. Instead, the Charter Review Commission wanted the Metro Commission increased to fourteen members, eleven elected from separate districts and three at-large. Election by districts, the commission contended, "makes local legislators more responsive and more accessible to the people they represent and is, therefore, more democratic." In addition, this election method more accurately represented "minority group interests." The mayor and the vice-mayor, the latter a new position, were not members of the Metro Commission under this plan, which would have introduced a sharp separation between legislative and executive functions.³⁵

33. On Progressive Era municipal reform, see Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, LV (October 1964), 157-69; Martin J. Schiesl, *The Politics of Efficiency: Municipal Administration and Reform in America, 1880-1920* (Berkeley, 1977), 133-48, 189-98; Bradley R. Rice, *Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin, 1977), 77-83; Ernest S. Griffith, *A History of American City Government: The Progressive Years and Their Aftermath, 1900-1920* (New York, 1974), 50-66, 130-31.

34. Sofen, *Miami Metropolitan Experiment*, 204.

35. Metropolitan Dade County, *Report and Recommendations of the Dade*

A referendum in March 1972 rejected all of the proposed amendments of the 1971 Charter Revision Commission.³⁶ Clearly, the consolidationists still held the upper hand. The voting power of the black community had not yet been fully organized, and the Cubans were only beginning to achieve citizenship and voting rights. Moreover, most Cubans still resided in the city of Miami; their attention was generally riveted on Miami politics rather than on Metro issues. Ethnic and neighborhood politics was still somewhat diffuse and no match for the powerful political and business groups which opposed any move toward decentralized government, local autonomy, and a more widely shared decision-making.

In January 1982, a third Charter Review Commission presented yet another analysis of Metro government. Headed by Dan Paul, who had helped write the original Metro charter, this latest study group grappled with many of the same issues which had plagued earlier review commissions. The commission's final report, however, did little to satisfy those seeking a greater measure of local autonomy or local representation. This latest commission proposed that Dade County be re-named Miami County, recommended the retention of the commission-manager system, and supported a "modified strong-mayor plan." Like the 1971 charter revision board, this new commission sought to strengthen the two-tier concept of local government through the creation of "limited purpose municipal units" (LPMUs) in the unincorporated areas. These LPMUs would provide local service in the same way that Dade County's twenty-seven cities provided municipal government for their citizens.³⁷

The big issue, once again, was the size and method of electing the Metro Commission. This issue, stimulating "lively debate," generated the most discussion at Charter Review Commission meetings. However, with two members dissenting, the commission ultimately urged the retention of the existing at-large system without change. The commission made this recommendation despite the overwhelming support of citizens' groups for the adop-

County Metropolitan Study Commission (Miami, 1971), 6. DeGrove, "Metropolitan Dade County," 6, recommended a twenty-member Metro Commission, fifteen elected from districts and five elected at-large.

36. *Miami Herald*, March 15, 1972.

37. Charter Review Commission, *Interim Report*, 1-4, 22, 33-34.

tion of a district system or a combination of district and at-large seats. In hearings before the commission, groups as diverse as the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, New City Political Action Committee, Kendall Federation of Homeowners Associations, and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce advocated the combined district and at-large electoral method. The Dade County League of Cities, long the opponent of Metro's centralized government, also supported the combined election system, as well as a true two-tier system of local government. The NAACP and the Florida State Committee on Hispanic Affairs, among other organizations, advanced the district election system.³⁸

The local press and some political leaders also entered the fray, calling for an end to at-large commission elections. The *Miami Herald* editorialized in favor of combined elections: "In a community so geographically large and of such diverse population, it is . . . unwise to cling rigidly to the practice of countywide election of all commissioners."³⁹ Similarly, the *Miami News* asserted "the need for more direct representation within the government of Metropolitan Dade County."⁴⁰ Barbara Carey, the Metro Commission's only black member, supported an eleven-member commission, ten elected from districts and a mayor elected county-wide. Under the existing at-large system, Carey argued, "it's almost impossible for a minority candidate to win a countywide election unless that person is an incumbent or has very high visibility."⁴¹ Muddying the waters a bit, Mitchell Wolfson of the original Metro charter board and William Frates who chaired the 1971 charter revision study both advocated a change to the district election system. "In view of the present fragmented ethnic and economic nature of the various municipalities," Wolfson wrote in November 1981, "I feel it would be best to have county commissioners elected by district."⁴²

Opposition to the Charter Review Commission position mounted quickly, and there was a strong ethnic dimension to this opposition. Two members of the review commission-Albert C. Ferguson, a black member, and Maria Elena Torano, a Hispanic

35. *Ibid.*, 23-31, 131-34; *Miami News*, July 17, September 4, 16, 1981.

39. *Miami Herald*, December 18,

40. *Miami News*, October 5, 1981.

41. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1982; *Miami Times*, July 1, 1982.

42. Charter Review Commission, *Interim Report*, 134; *Miami Herald*, November 12, 1981.

member— filed a minority report on the issue. Ferguson advocated a fifteen-member commission, with the mayor and six others elected at-large and eight from districts. Torano wanted a fourteen-member commission, half elected county-wide and half by district. The minority report noted that “various segments of this tri-ethnic community feel that they have no direct participation in County affairs.” The district system would be fairer for the county’s ethnic and minority groups, whose representatives often lacked visibility and funds to campaign effectively on a county-wide basis. “This cannot be taken lightly,” the minority report concluded.⁴³

Most of the Metro commissioners, however, came out against the idea of district elections or a combination of district and at-large elections. The general view of the commission was that district elections would, as one commissioner noted, “polarize the community.” Even George Valdes, the commission’s lone Hispanic member, advocated retention of at-large elections. “I sincerely believe county business is countywide business,” Valdes said. The majority of the commissioners also opposed the establishment of LPMUs because more municipalities would be created. To decentralize further in this way, commissioner Clara Oesterle contended, would be “regressing instead of moving ahead.”⁴⁴

Similarly, Metro manager Merrett Stierheim opposed the LPMU concept and the single-member district system of election. Speaking before the Charter Revision Commission, he asserted that the district system was “contrary to the concept of Metro government,” and that it would “balkanize” Dade County politics. An advocate of consolidated political authority, Stierheim was clearly uncomfortable with the idea of relinquishing power through decentralizing structural changes in the Metro charter.⁴⁵ The stated views of Metro commissioners and of the Metro manager against district elections presaged the outcome of the charter review process.

43. Charter Review Commission, *Interim Report*, 124-29; *Miami News*, December 19, 1981. See also Albert K. Karnig, “Black Representation on City Councils: The Impact of District Elections and Socioeconomic Factors,” *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, XII (December 1976), 223-42.

44. *Miami News*, February 18, June 28, 1982.

45. Charter Review Commission, *Interim Report*, 134; *Miami News*, October 2, 1981.

The method by which the Charter Review Commission was selected provides some insight into the nature of Metro politics and partially explains the unwillingness of the review board to initiate structural change. In December 1980, the Metro Commission implemented the five-year review requirement of the Dade County charter (a provision added to the charter in a 1976 referendum), voting to create the Charter Review Commission. The resolution permitted each commissioner to select one member of the review panel. As the *Miami News* pointed out, it was a procedure which smacked of "politics as usual." Each individual appointment tended to reflect the position of the commissioner making the selection. Not surprisingly, given the method, the ethnic and racial makeup of the Charter Review Commission duplicated the Metro Commission, each body having one black and one Hispanic member. Clearly, the Anglo majority on the charter review board began its work with a predilection against decentralizing structural changes in Metro government. As early as October 1981, the *Miami News* reported that the review board was "receiving go-slow signals from some Metro commissioners." All of this suggested that there was little chance that the revision process would lead to district elections or other decentralizing structural change.⁴⁶

In the spring of 1982, as it became clear that the Metro Commission would reject the district election amendment, a new organization made its appearance—Citizens for Accountable Metro. Spearheaded by the Kendall Federation of Homeowners Associations, the new localist coalition of seventeen groups sought to force the Metro Commission to permit a referendum on the district election question. Citizens for Accountable Metro advocated an eleven-member commission, seven elected by district and four county-wide, including the mayor. "District elections are essential in a diverse community such as Dade," the group's leaders argued in an article in the *Miami Herald*; this was the only electoral method by which black and Hispanic voters could obtain "fair representation." But despite intense lobbying by citizens groups, in July 1982 the Metro Commission voted six to three against submitting the election question to the voters in November. As the *Miami News* editorialized after the vote, the Metro

46. "Dade Voters Approve Charter Amendments," *National Civic Review*, LXV (December 1976), 570-71; *Miami News*, May 26, October 5, 1981.

Commission responded to "the pressure of established political power brokers" and appeared "more concerned with protecting its own interests than with responding to citizens' needs."⁴⁷ A last-minute petition drive to obtain 70,000 signatures and place the issue on the November 1982 ballot failed.

Interestingly, as the controversy over ethnic representation on the Metro Commission heated up, a different sort of ethnic issue emerged in Miami. Perhaps not coincidentally, charter revision debates developed in 1982 in Miami, where Mayor Maurice Ferre has been seeking structural changes in city government. Ferre appointed an advisory charter revision panel, headed by the same Dan Paul who had chaired the Metro charter revision board. Ferre is particularly interested in creating a strong mayor system, enlarging the Miami City Commission from five to seven or nine, and switching from the at-large to the district or combined system of electing city commissioners. Reflecting Miami's large Cuban population—almost fifty-six per cent in 1980 (Table 4)—the current five-member Miami City Commission, all elected at-large, is dominated by three Hispanics. Ferre, of Puerto Rican descent, is afraid that the continued growth of the Cuban population will result in an all-Cuban city commission in the near future. "It's important to have a balanced commission," Ferre noted recently. "There will be a much better government if different ethnic groups are represented." The district system, Ferre argues, will maintain minority representation on the city commission for Miami's blacks and Anglos (or non-Hispanic whites).⁴⁸ Suggesting the surge of Cuban voting power, Ferre himself barely survived electoral challenges from Cubans Manolo Rebozo and Xavier Suárez in the 1981 and 1983 city elections.

Despite Ferre's stand against the at-large system, the proposed charter changes were rejected by the voters in 1982.⁴⁹ Ironically,

47. *Miami News*, June 28, July 7, 8, 1982; *Miami Herald*, July 5, 7, 1982; *Miami Times*, July 8, 1982.

48. *Miami Herald*, May 9, June 10, 1982; *Miami News*, May 19, 20, July 20, 22, 24, 1982.

49. *Miami News*, November 2, 1982. Interestingly, in January 1984, Ferre may have begun laying the groundwork for a wider political base. In a speech to a group of journalists, he outlined a number of structural changes for the Metro government. Metro was not working effectively in its present form, Ferre argued, and "should be junked like a 25-year-old car." Echoing the charter revision debates of earlier years, Ferre rec-

TABLE 4
COMPOSITION OF POPULATION IN THE TEN LARGEST MIAMI SMSA
MUNICIPALITIES AND IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA, 1980

	Total Population	White	% White	Black	% Black	Hispanic	% Hispanic
Miami	346,931	231,069	66.6	87,110	25.1	194,087	55.9
Hialeah	145,254	131,164	90.3	2,143	1.5	107,908	74.3
Miami Beach	96,298	93,170	96.8	894	.9	21,408	22.2
Coral Gables	43,241	40,202	93.0	1,770	4.1	12,794	29.6
North Miami	42,566	39,240	92.2	1,597	3.8	6,252	14.7
North Miami Beach	36,481	33,697	92.4	1,845	5.1	3,521	9.7
Homestead	20,668	14,003	67.8	5,278	25.5	3,315	16.0
Opa-locka	14,460	4,576	31.6	9,182	63.5	2,449	16.9
Miami Springs	12,350	11,947	96.7	68	.5	2,607	21.1
South Miami	10,884	7,340	67.4	3,254	29.9	1,596	14.7
Unincorporated Area	800,346	605,900	75.7	162,909	20.4	209,365	26.2

Source: US. Bureau of Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing, Advance Reports, PHC80-V-11, Florida, Final Population and Housing Unit Counts* (Washington, 1981), 5, 14-18.

the at-large election system works against Hispanics at the Metro level, but works in their favor in Miami where they are a majority of the population. Equally ironical, the traditional white power elite opposes district elections for Dade County as yielding too much power to black and Hispanic minorities, but sees the same sort of districting as a means of maintaining access to political power for themselves in the city of Miami.

The charter revision controversy in Metropolitan Dade County reflects the emergence of a new ethnic and spatial politics. Black and Hispanic organizations, as well as white neighborhood groups, have begun to challenge Metro government as distant, unresponsive, and unrepresentative. For these groups, the at-large election of Metro commissioners symbolized all that was wrong with metropolitan government. The push to obtain district elections became a sort of panacea for those who thought themselves disfranchised by the existing structure of Metro government. The charter revision debates built upon a series of ethnic and territorial issues which have come to dominate recent urban politics in the Miami metropolitan area. Three separate but nevertheless connected controversies illuminate this pattern of contemporary urban politics.

One such territorial controversy emerged in the wake of the Liberty City race riot of May 1980. Much of the Liberty City black ghetto lies in unincorporated Dade County and is thus serviced by Metro. Liberty City blacks have long complained about bad housing, police brutality, inadequate schools and recreational facilities, and poor transit and other municipal services in the ghetto.⁵⁰ One black member serves on the Metro Commission, but blacks clearly have insufficient political clout at the Metro level to obtain improvements in delivery of services. Thus, some Liberty City community leaders have been seeking

ommended that the county's twenty-seven municipalities be abolished and replaced by five to seven service districts. Under his plan, the existing Metro Commission would be replaced by a full-time county legislature of seventeen or nineteen members, all elected by district. Finally, the appointed county manager would be replaced by an elected chief executive. With perhaps a bit of sarcasm, *Miami Herald* political writer Geoffrey Tomb noted that Ferre "made no proposals as to who the new county boss should be." *Miami Herald*, January 20, 1984.

50. United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami* (Washington, 1982).

to create through incorporation a new fifteen-square-mile municipality with a population of just over 100,000.

Black supporters of the plan view this so-called "New City" as a means of acquiring local political power, a community-controlled police force, and a higher level of municipal services. "The bottom line is self determination for Black folks," contended one leader of the New City Political Action Committee. New City, he asserted, "would provide better services because the people who live in the area would be in charge of it. The [Metro] commissioners in charge of the area now live in Miami Beach and North Miami and they take care of those areas."⁵¹ Another supporter, also noting the inadequate provision of services by Metro, envisioned New City as a positive step forward in representative government: "The New City will mean that the people of this area will have some economic and political power for the first time in [their] lives."⁵²

New City opponents focused on the weak fiscal base of the Liberty City area and the new and higher property taxes that would have to be levied to provide an adequate level of municipal services. But despite strong support for New City in some quarters, in September 1981 the Metro Commission voted against submitting the plan to the voters in a referendum. Clearly, the New City controversy reflected the new territorial and spatial politics of the 1980s. Miami blacks sought decentralized local government for the Liberty City community, while the Metro Commission rejected this challenge to metropolitan government.⁵³

A second territorial conflict revolved around the Metro decision to build low-income public housing in an affluent white neighborhood in West Kendall, an unincorporated area in south-west Dade County. The so-called "Hammocks" project had its origins in 1975, when a Canadian developer was given permission to build 8,000 single-family homes if he also allocated twenty-six acres for 120 units of publicly-supported, low-income housing. As the first thirty-six units of the public housing were about to be started, white neighborhood groups in the Kendall area began pressuring the Metro Commission to halt the project. White

51. *Miami Times*, July 30, 1981.

52. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1981.

53. *Miami Herald*, September 18, 24, 1981; *Miami News*, September 21, 22, 24, 25, 1981.

homeowners did not want blacks moving into public housing in their community. In July 1981, bowing to the political opposition mounted by the Kendall Federation of Homeowners Associations and other neighborhood groups, the Metro Commission reversed its earlier decision and abandoned the public housing project in the Hammocks. Blacks were outraged and West Kendall residents pleased, but the controversy reminded both sides that local neighborhood and minority group interests were often hostage to Metro decision-making.⁵⁴

The recent conflict over bilingualism in Dade County also illustrates the emerging pattern of local politics in the Miami area. In 1973, reflecting the demographic changes in the Miami metropolitan area, the Metro Commission officially made Dade County bilingual.⁵⁵ As a result, most Metro agencies hired Hispanics, official documents were published in English and Spanish, informational signs were made bilingual, and some bilingual programs were introduced into the public schools.

However, by 1980, and particularly after the arrival of 125,000 new Cuban refugees in the Mariel boatlift, a ground swell of Anglo opposition to bilingualism had begun to emerge. Using the petition process, an Anglo group, Citizens of Dade United, forced a county-wide referendum on a proposed anti-bilingualism ordinance. The key section of the ordinance proposed that "the expenditure of county funds for the purpose of utilizing any language other than English, or promoting any culture other than that of the United States, is prohibited. All county government meetings, hearings, and publications shall be in the English language only."⁵⁶

The attack on bilingualism mobilized the Hispanic community as never before. The Spanish American League Against Discrimination led the opposition to the anti-bilingualism ordinance, but without success. In November 1980, in what the *Miami Herald* described as an "ethnic-line vote," Dade County voters approved the ordinance by a substantial majority. Some political analysts suggested that the bilingualism issue reflected a new sort of ethnic polarization in Miami. It also suggested that

54. *Miami Herald*, July 15, 19, 1981; *Miami News*, July 22, 23, 1981; *Miami Times*, July 23, 30, 1981.

55. *New York Times*, April 18, 1973.

56. *Miami Herald*, August 3, September 30, October 7, 26, 1980; *Miami Diario Las Americas*, July 25, August 10, October 23, November 7, 1980.

the existing structural framework of metropolitan government was unable to contain or accommodate the increasingly divisive ethnic and territorial politics of the 1980s.⁵⁷

As these three separate controversies suggest, urban politics in the Miami metropolitan area has taken on new dimensions in recent years. Citizens have been lobbying and organizing to defend their perceived ethnic interests and to protect their territorial space. Metro government, with its wider regional vision of urban problems, generally has been identified as the *bête noire* in this new pattern of ethnic and spatial politics. The recent charter revision debate, and particularly the question of substituting district for at-large elections, reflects this new political reality in metropolitan Miami. It is no coincidence that the district election plan was supported strongly by the New City Political Action Committee, the Kendall Federation of Homeowners Association, and the Spanish American League Against Discrimination.

In some respects, the localist-consolidationist battle of Metro's early days has been replicated, but in new and different ways. A new set of political actors representing neighborhood and ethnic groups has replaced the formerly outspoken defenders of the municipalities; indeed, the rising issues of the 1980s seem to have little relationship to existing municipal boundaries. Urban space, particularly in Dade County's huge unincorporated area, now has been divided according to ethnicity, race, and economic class.⁵⁸ Superseding earlier dissension between central city interests and the small suburban municipalities, these new divisions have become the stuff of urban politics in the Miami area. Metro has grown and prospered and delivered increasingly effective government during its quarter century of existence. But two decades of dramatic demographic change is beginning to have a telling effect on the socio-politics of the Miami metropolitan area. It seems unlikely that Metro will survive the new urban politics of the 1980s without fundamental structural revision.

57. *Miami Herald*, November 5, 1980.

58. Suggestive on this issue is Morton D. Winsberg, "Ethnic Competition for Residential Space in Miami, Florida, 1970-80," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, XIII (July 1983), 305-14.