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## POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

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### *The Cotton Fields Way Up North*

"Federal Spending: The North's Loss Is the Sunbelt's Gain" by Joel Havemann, Rochelle L. Stanfield, and Neal R. Peirce, in *National Journal* (June 26, 1976), 1730 M St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Federal tax and spending policies are abetting a huge transfer of wealth from the Northeast and Midwest to the fast-growing southern and western "sunbelt" states, according to *National Journal* computations. The people of the economically stagnating Northeast and Great Lakes states are paying out vastly more in federal taxes than they receive in federal outlays—a "balance of payments" deficit in fiscal 1975 amounting to \$18.6 billion for the five Great Lakes states (\$62.2 billion paid vs. \$43.6 billion received) and some \$10 billion for the mid-Atlantic states.

This money flow has existed for years; it only became a cause for alarm around 1970 when the steady shift of population, economic investment, and jobs to the South and West accelerated sharply. While black migration from South to North has fallen off dramatically since 1970, white out-migration from the Northeast and Midwest has continued, leaving the older regions burdened with a disproportionate share of the nation's low-income, poorly educated population. Ralph R. Widner, president of the Academy for Contemporary Problems, sees the big northern cities with their burden of poor people as "the nation's new cottonfields." Others, like Ralph L. Schlosstein, of the Congressional Joint Economic Committee staff, cite the North's higher labor and energy costs, aging plant and equipment, and predict a "self-feeding decline" for the older regions.

Some proposed remedies: shifting federal contract and payroll expenditures to high-unemployment areas, increased revenue sharing, federal aid to promote private investment in depressed regions. In addition, the Joint Economic Committee urges federal regional economic policies to supplement Washington's traditional efforts designed to stimulate or restrain the national economy as a whole.