

NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB BOOSTS COMMISSION PLAN FOR CITY

Sentiment of Meeting of Representative Men of Missoula Unquestionably in Favor of Such a Government--Three Legislators Declare Themselves and Promise to Vote for State Law Which Will Make Change Possible.

The commission from of government for cities is, in a word, the direct application of business principles to municipal needs.

The significant features of commission form of government, as found in all of the charters of the cities adopting it, are as follows:

A small commission, usually of five members, elected from the city at large by qualified electors. One of these commissioners is elected as mayor, the others as councilmen.

Assignment of the important divisions of city government to individual members of the commission, each of whom is directly responsible for the best conduct of his particular department.

Adequate compensation to the members of the commission for their time and labor, the city employing all the commissioners at living wages and requiring of them all necessary time.

Regularity, frequency and publicity of the meetings of the commission. All employees appointed by the commission, above the grade of day laborers, must be selected from those who have been recommended after examination by an independent civil service commission.

Provision is made for the retention in office of all employees so appointed, until discharged for cause after a public hearing.

Power to initiate any desired legislation is reserved in the people. This right is known as the initiative.

Power to call for a public vote on any measure adopted by the commission, before given effect as law, is reserved in the people. This is known as the referendum.

Power, at any time, to make any member of the commission stand for re-election is reserved in the people. This is known as the recall.

The granting of public franchises must always be submitted to the people.

The interest that is felt in Missoula in the right of cities of Montana, and especially the Garden city, to adopt the commission form of government was given eloquent expression last evening at the meeting of the Neighborhood club, which was held in the lodge room of the Masonic temple. The Neighborhood club, through its president, Forester W. B. Greeley, has taken the initiative in this movement in Missoula and the meeting last night was the outcome of several weeks of quiet work and preparation. The invitation extended to all citizens, whether club members or not, was answered by a large attendance of representative men, and the free and full discussion of the question was of much educational value and very interesting. The question was taken up squarely upon its merits. This was the first of a series of meetings which the club proposes to have to consider the same subject and only the fundamental principles of the plan were aimed at last night. There was no attack made upon the government of Missoula or any other city and the speakers indulged in no personalities. The attack, if such it may be termed, was made upon the fundamental principle of present city governments in general and the question presented was how the commission plan might overcome some of the existing evils.

Legislators Will Help.

The matter was advanced last night even farther than had been anticipated. It was found that a great many of the gentlemen present were not only interested but had made a thorough study of the subject and were ready to declare themselves and take a firm

stand in favor of the change. Among these were three members of the state legislature from Missoula county, W. W. Berry, Ronald Higgins and Frank Woody. They all took an active part in the meeting and each declared himself favoring a change in the existing fundamental principles and of the opinion that the commission plan in some one of its forms would be the best remedy. Each spoke of the first step necessary, the passage of the state law granting cities the right to choose for themselves, and said they were willing to work and vote for such a measure.

Dr. Underwood Talks.

President Greeley opened the meeting by briefly stating the purpose of the call and introduced Dr. Underwood of the university as the first speaker. Dr. Underwood went into details as to the history of the movement, citing the cities which had adopted the measure and the success attained. He called attention to the features which made it popular and how much of its success came from an awakening of a general public interest, through the forced publicity of the transactions of the governing boards and the manner of their elections.

"Whether the system under the commission plan is more or less democratic than at present," said Dr. Underwood, "depends upon the interpretation we put upon democracy; whether we hold it to be the distribution of offices or the keeping control of those in office. I accept the latter view and believe it to be best carried out in the commission plan." The speaker said that morals and politics were inseparable and that we may have good or bad government under any plan. "If the commission plan can arouse this general interest, morality and patriotism, then we must improve and grow better," urged the speaker. Dr. Underwood closed by saying that the logical conclusion was that whatever the result might be there seemed no good reason why cities should not have the privilege of trying out the new scheme.

Argument Continued.

Associate Forester F. A. Silcox was the next speaker. He presented first the brief statements of commission government, as given at the beginning of this article, and then enlarged upon each of the ten basic principles. He urged that commission government was no longer an experiment, that it was in operation in eight states of the union and in five great cities of over 100,000 inhabitants; that it had accomplished the successful demonstration of the truth, that the people can safely rule themselves if given a fair chance to do so.

Speaking in general of what the plan promises to the people, he said: "The commission government plan does not insure good government; no mere system can do that. The people must be alert, interested in their city and its administration, and ready to act if their interests are not guarded. No scheme of government can take the place of these qualities on the part of citizens."

"But what the commission government plan does is to closely connect the people and the governing body; it enables the voters to really choose their men, to judge their acts with a fair degree of accuracy, and to hold them responsible for the kind of government given, retiring the commissioners, if necessary, or refusing approval of their laws; and this fact inspires the hope that American cities can be, after all, well administered; a new feeling that there is a plan which gives the average citizen a chance to determine who shall represent him,

and afterward to decide whether he is being adequately represented.

"This is why commission government is spreading so rapidly and so steadily, and why the results so far obtained have been so favorable."

Mr. Silcox was followed by M. A. Cromwell, who has lived in Des Moines, where the plan is in force; W. W. Berry, who put himself on record as being in favor of the plan and anxious to vote for the state law; J. M. Evans, who urged a strong point in its favor as being the fixing of responsibility; Frank Woody, Ronald Higgins, F. M. Lockman and others. Then there was a general discussion, many questions asked and answered and the meeting adjourned with the promise of the chairman of another session soon after the holidays.

Reference List.

For the convenience of those who wish to make a further study of the subject the following reference list has been prepared, some of which may be found at the libraries and others had for the asking by letter or postal card:

James G. Berryhill—"Des Moines Plan Argument." (Register and Leader, Des Moines, February 9, 1909.)

F. S. Bradford—"Commission Government in American Cities." (Commission Government in American Cities.) (In Municipal Journal and Engineer, Vol. 25, August 5, 1908, pp. 174-175.) "Difference Between This and Galveston Plan." (In Municipal Journal and Engineer, Vol. 24, June 3, 1908, pp. 694-695.) Address E. S. Bradford, department of commerce and labor, Washington, D. C.

R. A. Campbell—"Commission System of Municipal Government--Des Moines Plan." (In American Political Science Review, Vol. 1, August, 1907, pp. 621-626.)

E. R. Chesborough—"The Success of the Galveston Experience." (In National Municipal League, Proceedings, 1908, pp. 181-192.)

"City Government by Commission," a symposium on the Galveston, Newport and Des Moines plans and other commission plans, by William Bennett Munroe; "Newport Plan of City Government," by F. E. Chadwick; "The Des Moines Plan," by Silas B. Allen. (In Chautauquan, Vol. 51, June, 1908, pp. 108-141.)

"City Government." (In Outlook, Vol. 82, August 14, 1909, pp. 865-866.)

"The City Hall." (Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities, published monthly by Municipal Publishing Co., Des Moines, Iowa.) Discussions of practical operation of the Des Moines plan and other commission systems in each issue since January, 1909; also information as to progress of this plan of government in 15 or 20 other cities. Back numbers obtainable from publishers.

"Debate on the Commission Form of Government." State University of Iowa vs. University of Minnesota. (Published by The Forensic League, Iowa City, Iowa.)

C. DeHoney—"Breaking Down Ward Lines in Cities." (In World Today, Vol. 18, pp. 487-490, May, 1910.)

H. E. Deming—"The Government of American Cities, a Program of Democracy." (New York--G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909, p. 222; the Galveston plan, pp. 107-123, 161.)

"Des Moines Plan of City Government." (In World's Work, Vol. 13, May, 1909, pp. 11, 533.)

S. J. Dillon—"The Des Moines Plan." (In National Magazine, Vol. 26, September, 1907, pp. 710-714.) "The Des Moines Plan of City Government." (In Overland Monthly, Vol. 50, October, 1907, pp. 324-328.)

C. W. Elliott—"Municipal Government by Commission." (In South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. 5, April, 1906, pp. 174-183.)

A. M. Fuller—"Municipal Government by Commission." Address A. M. Fuller, Meadville, Pa.

"The Galveston Idea." (In Bliss, W. D. P., ed. New Encyclopedia of Social Reform, pp. 529-530. New York, 1908.)

"The Galveston Plan of City Government." (In Municipal Engineering, Vol. 22, April, 1907, pp. 255-258.)

L. F. C. Garvin—"Better City Government." (In Arena, Vol. 41, January, 1909, pp. 38-41.)

D. Goodyear—"Example of Haverhill." (In Independent, Vol. 60, January 28, 1909, pp. 194-195.)

"Government of Cities by Commis-

Knapp Becomes Circuit Judge



MARTIN A. KNAPP.

Washington, Dec. 20.—MARTIN A. Knapp was confirmed today by the senate to be an additional circuit judge of the United States court for the Second judicial district. Automatically he ceased to be chairman of the interstate commerce commission and will ascend the bench of the court of commerce as presiding judge when it is organized. The names of four other members of the proposed court are now in the

hands of a sub-committee of the committee on judiciary and will be reported soon.

In order to fill the vacancies on the interstate commerce commission, the senate committee on interstate commerce held a special meeting today and decided to report favorably on the names of C. C. McChord of Kentucky and B. H. Meyer of Wisconsin. Their names will be reported to the senate tomorrow, and it is thought they will be promptly confirmed.

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