

City Government

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(Based on "My Neighbor" by Rev. J. S. Woodsworth.)

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IN our previous studies in this series we have been considering a number of city problems. In the first place there is the problem of the making of a city. Should a city be allowed to grow up at random, or should it be built up according to a preconceived plan looking many years into the future? What factors should enter into this plan? There is the problem of the struggling masses—the problem of poverty. What are its causes, its results and its remedies? There is the problem of the home. What are the causes which tend to the undermining of the home? How may the home with its uplifting and refining and hallowing influences be saved in our

the city has no power to act in any matter affecting its own interests unless such power has been delegated to it by the Provincial Legislature. Municipal powers therefore are in this country enumerated in great detail. One result of this, is frequent appeals to the Legislature for fragmentary additional powers and in the interim, serious delays and interruptions in business. Another result of this policy is the introducing of party politics or inter-municipal "log-rolling" into local issues. In our newer Western cities incorporation is being granted on more general terms.

In the determination of the relative powers of city and state there are two

tive chambers, while much of the business was carried on by Boards appointed by the Legislature, and largely independent of the council. In Canada the mayor is elected. The municipal offices are filled by the mayor and council. There is a tendency to separate the legislative and administrative functions so that many of our cities have now a Board of Control, which is the executive body of the council while the council as a whole is the legislative body. In many of our cities certain municipal affairs are administered by Boards independent of the city council, such as public schools, the police department, and the public parks.

In some countries, notably in the United States, experiments are being made looking to the perfecting of the machinery of city government. Among these, one of the most important is the Commission form of government by which several commissioners elected by the people administer the affairs of the city, each commissioner being the head of a particular department. This plan has many advantages, is likely to remedy many evils, and is worthy of serious consideration. The plan involves the adoption of what is known as Direct Legislation, whereby the people have the privilege of expressing their will in all important matters pertaining to the welfare of the city. Inasmuch therefore as the people themselves have a voice in the governing of their city the character of the people is of greater importance than the perfection of the machine which they operate.

Some Continental cities advertise for a mayor at a good salary, thus securing a man with special training and wide administrative experience. While this may seem strange to us, it is however a plan which recognizes certain facts, namely—Municipal government is a profession, and not a business; it is a difficult profession, requiring special training; and it requires so much training and so much experience that a man should devote his whole life to it. Such a plan would prevent a man from being elected or appointed to the office of mayor merely because he has influence with the people.

PUBLIC UTILITIES.

It is the duty of the city government to provide city utilities and exercise control over them. When it becomes impracticable for a family to provide its own well and pump, then the city must provide an adequate water supply in the benefits of which every family may share. When it becomes impossible for each family to dispose of its own refuse and dump heap then the city must provide a sewerage system and a scavenger system. When it becomes impracticable for a man to keep a horse and buggy of his own, then the city should provide public conveyances and means of travel such as the street car system. Likewise the lighting system, the telephone system, and all other public utilities should be provided and controlled by the city government. Such utilities can be provided more efficiently and more economically by the city than by private enterprise.

Unfortunately in many cases instead of the city owning and controlling these public utilities they have been placed in the hands of private individuals and corporations who are making immense profits out of them. They are being conducted for the sake of bringing personal gain to the owners rather than for the advantage and convenience of the public. It is time to call a halt to the granting of special privileges and franchises to companies who secure them for their own advantage, that through them they may exploit the public. Such



5 FOUR THOUSAND FEET OF FIRST-CLASS LUMBER.

cities? There is the problem of social life made more difficult by the presence of large numbers of foreigners settled in their own quarters and holding to their own particular customs. Lastly there is the problem of the church, with its ever increasing obligations and activities and widening spheres of labor.

The time has come for us to consider seriously the means of solving these various problems. What remedies may be applied to the city's evils? What agencies may be employed in making our cities better habitations for men? Among such agencies may be mentioned city government, city churches, organized philanthropies, and individual service. In this article we are to consider city government and the place it should fill in building up and regulating a model city.

SPHERE OF GOVERNMENT.

Two general methods are adopted in determining the sphere of municipal action in city government. According to one method the city has no power to do anything except as that power is given to it by the state. According to the other method the city has power to do everything it wishes to do unless it has been expressly forbidden by the state. This method is largely followed on the Continent of Europe, while the former method prevails in England, the United States and in Canada. Hence in Canada

tendencies at work. The first is the demand for a larger measure of home-rule by the cities prompted by the feeling that the business of the city belongs essentially to the city and that it should not be hampered by outside interference or refusal to grant authority. This tendency is a revolt against the domination of corrupt machine politics through which valuable city franchises have been secured by greed corporations. The second tendency is the extension of administrative supervision by the government based on the feeling that the state is virtually concerned in the welfare of the city since the city is a part of the state. It is felt that the state being free from local influences may be able to exercise a beneficial control over certain phases of the city's life. Thus for instance we have our Provincial Board of Health and Federal Railway Commission.

THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

There are differences in the form of government found in different cities. In the simple English type the people elect a council which in turn appoints its mayor, its committees and executive officers. In the United States the city government was early modified along the lines of the state constitution. The mayor as well as the council was elected by the people and the council was divided into legislative and administra-