

What is a Municipality?

It is also necessary to understand the nature of a corporate municipality, and to realize how it came into existence. It is the creation of the State. It was not evolved to its present condition from a primary creation. Just as we see it now, with all its blemishes, the State made it, so the State is responsible for it, and to the State we must look for corrections.

Just as in the creation of the world, certain evolutionists confine the work of a Divinity to the First Cause, so certain apologists for Judge Lynch and other irregularities in districts over the line, describe them as the birth throes and growing pains of a young and vigorous (because American) people, from which will be evolved, in process of time, a peaceful and perfect community. And until then they are to be severely left alone.

But those who believe in an active and beneficent Providence, guiding and guarding the affairs of men and nations, will readily admit that a State which creates a municipality is morally bound to protect and guide its creature.

If the Government of British Columbia had fully recognized this obligation, instead of leaving the Municipal Act of last session to be introduced by a private member, it would have brought in a public bill. And rumor states that the Attorney-General had been working three months in preparing such a measure.

The Government of Ontario has been more mindful of its duties, as the Royal Commission on Municipal Institutions shows, whose First Report, issued in 1888, will be largely drawn upon in the following pages.

The Imperial Government, too, has a Local Government Board, which exercises considerable control over the municipal corporations in the United Kingdom.

What are the Abuses?

The abuses of the present system may be divided into two classes. First: Those arising out of the personal characters of the corrupt members of the representative bodies; and, second: Those which may be charged to the imperfections of the system.

But the former may be said to be resultant from the latter. This is true to

a great extent, but no security can be created which can protect the people's interests from unscrupulous men, who are false to the cause which they have been elected to serve.

It is true that, occasionally, unscrupulous representatives grow less careful, and the history of the word "boodle," and, at times, the inside of a penitentiary cell, illustrate the result. But, as a rule, the bar of public opinion is the only one before which they are arraigned. In certain cases, it is just possible, that the native instincts of the great American people may be correct, and that there is, after all, some justification for Judge Lynch.

The Evils of the System.

The Ontario Commission, if it proved nothing else, established beyond doubt, that the municipal system, such as is still in existence in British Columbia, has led, in other places, to great evils. And a wise Legislature, instead of leaving the infant municipalities to struggle amidst their difficulties, trusting to the instincts of the people to evolve a perfect system from amongst themselves, would profit by the experiences gained in other places, and, by force of law, create in this Province the most modern and the completest form of municipal system as yet ascertained.

In the United States.

The Commissioners report as follows, concerning cities in the United States; and, as human nature is pretty nearly the same all the world over, what took place in the States, is a fair criterion of what will take place elsewhere, under the same conditions:

The government in other American cities was organized under charters long before any one had ventured to suggest that Boston could not be governed properly by its town meetings and its select men. A charter was given to Philadelphia, by William Penn, in 1691. All early charters necessarily bore a general resemblance to one another, but they differed in several important particulars, and all were many times amended. There is scarcely a single point on which each does not differ from several others. After the close of the civil war an era of large expenditures began, and the value of the different systems, as a means of procuring what was best, to be done at a reasonable cost, was severely tested. Not one withstood that test satisfactorily. In all the cities extravagant and wasteful expenditures led to heavy taxation, and in many corruption was said to be rampant. Many cities found that a thorough change of system was necessary for their protection. It is remarkable that in all the great cities in which

such changes were made, the executive were discredited

And the ability of a state to govern its own affairs

While done in the name of the people, the result is often a failure

was better than the present system