

Elective Commission Government

WESTERN CANADA has developed a form of municipal government which is different from that in any other part of the world. It may be termed Elective Commission Government. Recently the editor of the CANADIAN COURIER addressed a letter to the city clerks of Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary, and Edmonton, asking them a number of questions as to the particular features which distinguish their system as it works out practically. These questions and quotations from the replies are given herewith.

The questions asked are as follows: (1) What members comprise your Board of Control or executive body? (2) How long are these men appointed for? (3) Do they attend the meetings of the City Council regularly? (4) What status have they when they attend the council meetings? (5) Does the Board or the City Council engage, appoint, discharge and fix the salaries of the civic employees? (6) Do the permanent members of the Board of Control or administrative board give their exclusive time to the work, and what are their salaries?

The City Clerk of Calgary writes a clear and informing letter as follows:

Calgary, Alta., Feb. 3, 1914.

Editor, Canadian Courier:

Sir,—I beg to acknowledge receipt of your favour of the 30th ult., re government of this city. Our system is known as the elective commission form for executive purposes and with a council of 13 as the legislative body. The Board of Commissioners are three in number, the Mayor being the chairman, one commissioner of public works and one commissioner of public utilities. The chairman of this board is elected for a period of one year and receives a salary of \$5,000 per annum. The two other commissioners are elected for a period of two years and their terms run so that one commissioner retires at the end of each year. They receive a salary of \$4,000 per annum each. They attend the meetings of the city council, but have no voting power. Their presence, at these meetings, is necessary, as a number of recommendations from their board are usually up for consideration, and the council oftentimes requires information as to the operation, etc., of the departments under their jurisdiction.

The City Commissioners recommend to council all appointments of the heads of departments, with the exception of the City Comptroller, and the council to defeat their recommendations must vote against same to the extent of a two-thirds majority.

As regards the salaries, the commissioners prepare the estimates yearly and after due consideration recommend as to increases in salaries, new appointments and salaries for same, etc., etc. These propositions are liable to be amended by a two-thirds vote of the council.

The gentlemen comprising the Board of Commissioners, in Calgary, are required to give their whole time to the services of the city in their respective offices.

Yours truly,

J. M. MILLER, City Clerk.

Regina has the same form of government as Calgary and the executive body is also known as the Board of Commissioners. The only difference practically is the status of the Mayor who holds an honorary position but otherwise has as much power as the Mayor of Calgary. The City Clerk's letter is as follows:

Regina, February 3rd, 1914.

Editor Canadian Courier:

Sir,—Replying to your letter of enquiry of the 30th ult., I may say that the system of government here is a modified form of Commission Government, with the council as the legislative body. The council consists of ten (10) members, and administers the affairs of the city through its standing committees. In place of a board of control we have two permanent commissioners, the mayor being an ex-officio commissioner and chairman of the board by virtue of his office.

The commissioners are appointed by the council and hold office during its pleasure; they attend all meetings and act in an advisory capacity to the council. One commissioner devotes himself to all matters appertaining to works, while the other specializes in finance. The commissioners nominate to the council for approval all heads of departments required to be appointed by by-law or resolution of the council, and any other permanent officials, clerks or assistants. They have the power also to suspend such head of a department, etc. They also recommend to council the salaries to be paid to the various heads of departments, officials, clerks, assistants, etc. The two commissioners devote the whole of their time to their work; the salary of the works commissioner being \$5,500 per annum, while

that of the finance commissioner is, at present, \$4,500. His Worship the Mayor devotes a certain portion of the day, usually from 10 till 12 in the morning, in conference with the two commissioners, receiving no fixed salary. He is, however, granted annually an honorarium, usually of \$2,500, for his services by a resolution of the council.

I trust I have fully covered all the points raised by you. If, however, there is any further information you desire, I shall be pleased to furnish same upon request.

Yours truly,

A. W. POOL, City Clerk.

Saskatoon is more like Calgary, the Mayor being a paid commissioner. The first three clauses of the by-law which establishes and defines the powers of the commissioners reads as follows:

"1. Subject to the legislative jurisdiction of the city council, there shall be for the city, three commissioners, to be called 'the Commissioners of the City of Saskatoon,' whose powers and duties shall be of an executive and administrative character; and with the powers and duties hereinafter set forth, etc.

"2. The Mayor shall be, ex-officio, one of the commissioners, and the other two shall be appointed by by-law by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the council, to hold office during the pleasure of the council. Such two commissioners shall devote their whole time to the city's affairs and may be dismissed from office on a similar vote of two-thirds of the members of the council.

"3. The commissioners and each of them shall be paid such salary or remuneration as the council may fix, but such amount shall not be less than \$1,500 each annually."

It will be noted that in Saskatoon the commissioners are appointed during pleasure as in Regina, whereas they are appointed for a period of two years in Calgary.

The letter from the City Clerk of Saskatoon is as follows:

Saskatoon, February 4th, 1914.

Editor Canadian Courier:

Sir,—Replying to your circular letter of the 30th ult., with reference to the method of administering the municipal affairs of this city, I am pleased to state as follows:

The administration of the city's entire affairs is controlled by a board of city commissioners, which consists of the mayor and two specially appointed commissioners, one at a salary of \$4,000 and the other \$5,000 per year.

The commissioners are appointed to hold office during the pleasure of the council, being subject to receiving three months' notice in case it is intended to dispense with their services. They attend all meetings of the council in an advisory capacity, but, of course, have not a vote in the council.

The commissioners make all recommendations to the council with respect to engaging and discharging civic employees, and fixing of salaries. They give their entire time to the affairs of the city.

In short, the commissioners are the executive and administrative body, subject, at all times, to the legislative jurisdiction of the council.

Yours very truly,

ANDREW LESLIE.

The Moose Jaw by-law has only one operating clause as follows:

"1. There shall be appointed two commissioners who shall hold office during the pleasure of the council and subject, however, to dismissal as provided in the city's acts, and who, together with the mayor, shall be called the Commissioners of the City of Moose Jaw."

The by-law provides that they shall attend all meetings of the council in an advisory capacity. They nominate to the council for approval all heads of departments and recommend the salaries of all officers and clerks. They also have power to dismiss or suspend any head of a department, with the exception of the City Solicitor, City Auditor, or the police department. The commissioners must give their whole time and attention to the business of the city.

The letter from the City Clerk of Moose Jaw is as follows:

Moose Jaw, February 4th, 1914.

Editor Canadian Courier:

Dear Sir,—I am in receipt of your letter of the 30th ultimo, and in reply beg to enclose copy of By-law No. 595, defining the duties and powers of the commissioners of this city.

I believe the by-law answers questions 1, 3, 4 and 5. Question No. 2 is also partly answered in the by-law, Section 1; the City Act, however, provides that the council must give the commissioners three months' notice of dismissal, and the commissioners

must also give the council three months' notice of resignation. Question No. 6 is also partly answered; salaries being, Mayor, \$3,000; Finance Commissioner, \$4,200; and Engineering Commissioner, \$6,000.

Yours very truly,

E. B. BONNELL, City Clerk.

The Edmonton system has heretofore been much the same as the other western cities, but its present mayor was elected on a purely commission government platform. In short, Edmonton proposes to do away with its legislative body and give full powers to an enlarged commission as is now the case in Lethbridge and St. John, N.B. The letter from the City Clerk is as follows:

Edmonton, Alta., February 16th, 1914.

Editor Canadian Courier:

Sir,—Replying to your letter of the 30th ult., the administration of this city consists of a mayor elected every year, and ten aldermen elected for a period of two years. Their business is legislative.

The administrative functions of the city are vested in the hands of a Board of Commissioners appointed by the city council. The board consists of the mayor and four other commissioners, making five commissioners in all. Their salary is uniform—\$5,000 per annum each. Their duties are definitely assigned and a council committee of a similar designation is co-operative with each of them. Each of the commissioners gives the whole of his time to the business of the city. They attend all meetings of the council in a consultative and advisory capacity, but, of course, do not vote.

The various utilities of the city are placed under the care of the commissioners who engage the superintendents of the departments, and the superintendents in turn engage their own staff. Any revision of salaries is considered by council when the annual estimates are under consideration.

Yours truly,

CHAS. ED. K. COX, City Clerk.

It will be noted that in these five western cities they have elective or appointed commissions instead of boards of control. They believe that their system secures a continuity of policy and administration which is impossible with a yearly elected board of control, and there is much to be said in favour of their contention.

Kinship

By C. G. L.

TWO men stood looking into a lake. One saw in the water the form of an angel. The other, by his description of his vision, made it plain that he had seen a demon. Both were confident in their assertions and the latter was as pleased as the former.

We classify men according to their conduct. Our judgments at best are only relative and conditional. The only criterion by which men can be judged absolutely is not open to human inspection. It is not the deed, but the motive; not the achievement, but the aspiration; which is the measure of the man. Motive involves an end, aspiration implies an ideal. Ideals and ends are mental products. Hence there is much value in the saying, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Each individual thinker divides the whole into ego and non-ego. The ego exists in certainty, the non-ego in probability. Between the two is a great gulf fixed. The relation between them is of harmonic progression; the ego-as-knowing being distinct from the ego-as-known. Thus we read ourselves into all that we experience. Only in proportion as I know myself can I know anything apart from myself. By knowledge of the ego I construct a system for the non-ego. According as the ego is noble or base will its corresponding non-ego be. The pure in heart see God.

Appreciation is the sympathetic recognition of that which harmonizes with one's own ideal. It is a discovery of the likeness of the ego in the non-ego. Hence one is pleased most with that in which is hid his own dominating principle. A noble character meets with slander from the ignorant and base because these have so little moral worth in themselves. Poetry, classical music, and art are most truly attractive to those whose lives are a harmony and a symmetry in themselves. God is apprehended by those who do His will.

The story of the lake is a parable of human experience. He who saw the angel was one whose thoughts were manly and his life clean. The other was harbouring in himself the demon he saw in the water. Neither was conscious that what he saw was his own judgment of himself. Each was pleased because each had found the ideal of his soul.