

Business-like Organization of The Municipal Commission

By Alderman A. J. Samis.

THE above diagram sets forth the principal features which the writer regards as essential to city government, and especially adapted to the carrying out of a large volume of municipal business, such as is being undertaken by Calgary.

The extreme left hand column from top to bottom may be classified as "the source of power," the second column, "the council or legislative branch," the third column, "the commission or executive branch," and the fourth column, "the operative branch" in charge of a staff of superintendents who are specialists in their respective departments and possess the technical expert knowledge necessary to their successful operation.

Since the people are the source of all power and provide all the revenue, they are here placed in their proper position at the very basis of the city's government, and into their hands is placed the powerful machinery of the initiative, referendum and recall, which they may secure from their servants prompt and absolute obedience to their will. Recognizing, however, that these powerful weapons are dangerous in the hands of an uninformed electorate, provision is made for a "Municipal Bulletin" to be published monthly at the public expense and mailed free of charge to every taxpayer in the city, giving accurate information and disinterested statements of fact as to what is going on at the city hall. A good live bulletin such as is now being published "by the people" of Los Angeles and elsewhere, would do much to create and sustain a healthy public opinion, that would be capable of intelligently using the initiative, referendum and recall, without which these high-sounding reforms become real sources of public danger.

In recognition of the underlying principle of all organization that "everybody must be held responsible to somebody" all of the departments and sub-departments of the city are grouped into five large natural divisions or departments, and five commissioners are put in charge. I, the commissioner of public works, the commissioner of public safety, the commissioner of parks and boulevards, the commissioner of health and sanitation, and the commissioner of finance and public affairs. The commissioner of public works would be charged with the cleaning and watering of the streets, the construction and maintenance of the pavements, curb and gutter, the construction and care of sewers, drains and laterals, together with all the bridge and culvert building and grading necessary to facilitate traffic throughout the city's forty odd square miles of area. By discontinuing the arduous and undignified squabbles which take place in the council annually over the letting of pavement contracts and doing the work ourselves with our own plant, the tedious and expensive delays in getting the work started each spring would be avoided and we would not only save the companies' profits as well as the money we are paying a staff of inspectors to "twiddle" the contractors, but incidentally we would keep our money at home. This efficiency and economy could be very successfully effected by having this work thoroughly organized under the supervision of the commissioner of public works.

The commissioner of public safety would have charge of the police, fire, building, health and sanitation departments of the city. While it will be admitted that Police Chief Cuddy and Fire Chief Smart have done splendidly well, and have made great progress, little supervision at the hands of the city commission, he would be a short-sighted critic indeed who failed to realize that the successors of these gentlemen may be hopelessly failures. Any system of government that is to endure must anticipate just such contingencies and make strong provision to "pick up" any department that is "falling down," not waiting until conditions become intolerable. But the commissioner of public safety would have his hands very full right now without spending much time on police or fire. The municipalization of the General Hospital and future hospitals is imminent and desirable. The proper method of maintenance of hospitals by the taxes of all instead of the charity of the few inevitably involves the management and control of the hospitals by all instead of by the few. Hence it is proposed to abolish the hospital board and transfer the powers and functions of that body to the city commission under the supervision of the commissioner of public safety.

The electric light, the waterworks and the street railway (the revenue producing departments of the city) naturally group together and it seems most fitting that the man in charge should be called the commissioner of public utilities. The power department, which closes its books into those of the electric light department, would also come under this commissioner. As is known to everybody there are all large and rapidly growing concerns and the man in charge would be kept very busy. The sewers and waterworks would seem to be kindred departments that should be placed under the same commissioner, but practical men consulted favor their separation as indicated above.

The abolition of the parks board contemplated by the council means the transferring of their duties to the city commission, and the suggestion is that this work come under the supervision of the commissioner of parks and boulevards. In addition it is proposed that he have the managing and regulating of the sports and athletic grounds throughout the city; and further, that he be asked to organize the city market and put it on a paying basis if possible. This commissioner would have a great opportunity. He could win lasting fame by organizing an aggressive campaign of reclaiming and protecting the city property that is being destroyed by the ravages of our rivers. One instance exists where private parties have diverted the course of the Bow, almost completely destroyed a city boulevard 150 feet wide and half a mile long and enormously valuable. It would be the privilege and duty of the commissioner of parks and boulevards to go right after all such encroachers. Then he could render invaluable service by assisting the city planning commission (advisory) in forming a comprehensive boulevarding and playgrounds system, and securing from the council the legislation and money necessary to the carrying out of these very important projects.

The question as to just what functions should be assigned to the mayor under commission government is a much debated one; some holding the extremely autocratic view that His Worship should be given sweeping powers and allowed to dominate and dictate everything, while others hold the opposite extreme view that the mayor should be an ornamental, brass button-

ed figurehead, whose duties should be confined to shaking hands with strangers, looking wise and commenting on the weather. Needless to say both conceptions are wrong, and in the above plan, careful provision is made for restraining a roughshod autocratic chief magistrate, as well as assisting a mayor who is weak. He is given charge of the department of Finance and Public Affairs and certain officials such as the City Clerk, Solicitor, Treasurer, Engineer etc., who cannot be made subservient to any one department because they really belong to all of the departments, are made answerable to him, and any weakness shown by any of these officials would have to be satisfactorily explained to the commission and council by His Worship. These supervisory duties though essential to proper discipline would claim very little of His Worship's time who besides assisting the council and commission in shaping the general policy of the city would with the aid and advice of the City Solicitor, Comptroller, and Treasurer and the Finance Committee of the Council, concentrate his efforts in "financing" the city.

Many people incline to the opinion that the commissioners should be appointed by the council instead of being elected by the people, some even asserting that it is an inconsistent and "legislatively incorrect" procedure to have two elected bodies, council and commission, paralling each other. This erroneous impression arises from a misconception of the functions of a commission, paralling each other. This to observe the principals of government in vogue in larger spheres, Provincial and Dominion. Let me use an example showing the fallacy of the popular notion that a city commissioner should be a technical expert. Any citizen who will pay a visit to the Municipal Power plant at Victoria Park and observe the thoroughly modern building and plant, the up to the minute equipment, the careful system of bookkeeping and the scrupulously correct conditions evident upon every hand, would say that Commissioner Graves must be an expert indeed to have attained such results, but he is not, he does not claim to be. Superintendent McCaul is the technical expert who thought the whole business out, then laid his plans before Commissioner Graves, who played the very important part of securing the necessary legislation and money that made our splendid power plant possible. This example (and it is applicable in every department of the city) proves that it is the superintendents immediately in charge of the various departments (McCaul in this instance) and not the city commissioners who should be technical experts. Indeed it is not only unnecessary but it is undesirable that a city commissioner be a technical man, because being entirely wedded to one particular hobby he is likely to lack the necessary interest in the other departments under his charge to sufficiently grasp their needs and as a consequence fail to properly champion their cause before the council and commission to get the legislation and money necessary to the successful operation of them all.

The objection that it is legislatively incorrect to have both council and commission elected is not sustained by provincial or Dominion precedent. Before Premier Sifton could make Hon. Mr. Cross a member of Alberta's executive council, that gentleman had to be elected by the people of Edmonton, and before Mr. Borden could make Mr. Bennett the minister of mines in the Dominion government, as many hope he will, Mr. Bennett will again have to appeal to his constituents. If to be a member of the executive council of the province or a member of the executive council of the Dominion, he law demands an appeal to the people, what inconsistency can there be in a member of the executive council of Calgary's council—for that is what the commission really is—being forced to secure the popular approval? The objection that the cases are not analogous because the commissioners have not a vote at the council board, is completely met and answered by the fact that the recommendations of the commissioners cannot be rejected by the council without a two-thirds vote, which amounts to the same thing as giving the commissioners a vote at the council board even as the members of the executive council of the province and Dominion vote with the rest of the members of parliament. If commissioners had to be technical men it would be downright insanity to make their positions elective, but since they need not be technical men, and since to elect them is not legislatively incorrect, I am strongly in favor of their being elected by the people. By lengthening the term of the mayor and aldermen to four years, and having four aldermen and one commissioner to stand for re-election each year, the effects of short terms could be avoided and at the same time there would be guaranteed to the ratepayers the safety value of an annual election with its free open platform discussion of municipal affairs, thus rendering repairs to the cumbersome and drastic recall unnecessary except in case of officials suddenly developing gross incompetence or crookedness necessitating their being immediately removed.

While in their individual capacities as heads of their respective departments all five of the city commissioners could render the city splendid service, it would be in their collective capacity in shaping the city's policy and especially in protecting our public utilities against despoiling persons who insisted upon using them to their own political or financial ends that a numerically strong commission would render their most effective service. For instance, a commissioner has friends who own a subdivision five or six miles from town, and he endeavors to extend our street railway to it in order to make them wealthy at the public expense. Or it may be that a commissioner's term is about to expire and in order to secure his own re-election he advocates unwarranted reductions in water rates or electrical energy, or favors forty street railway tickets for a dollar, regardless of the deficits which must follow such reckless policy. The other commissioners whose elections were two or three years in the future would naturally checkmate his cunning enthusiasm and save our public utilities from deficits. These examples are not visionary or far-fetched, but ever present and serious. A strong board is necessary to withstand such attacks. No doubt many objections will be urged to enlarging the commission; some will say that too many offices are being created, failing to note that a net decrease is proposed—two commissioners added and four aldermen dispensed with. Others will say that we cannot afford the extra expense, without stopping to think how utterly insignificant are the salaries involved compared with the millions of dollars

Whereby in addition to referring all money bylaws to the people, a provision that no bylaw, ordinance or resolution—except in certain stated cases of emergency—shall become operative for a period of ten days from the time of its passage by the Council, during which time a petition of say 25 per cent. of the ratepayers, filed with the City Clerk shall be sufficient to force the Council to abandon the proposed measure or immediately submit it to the people for a vote.

Whereby upon say 25 per cent. petition of the ratepayers, any elected official can be forced to face a special election or vacate his office—said special election to be deferred for six weeks from date of filing of petition.

(Continued on Page Twelve)

Municipal Bulletin

Issued monthly under the supervision of the City Clerk, containing financial reports and full text of all proposed bylaws, ordinances and resolutions of the Council, together with brief and explanatory information. Mailed free of charge to every ratepayer. Expense to be met out of the city's current revenue.

COMPTROLLER

Appointed by the Council and answerable to that body alone.

ALDERMAN

Elected from City at large. Two year term. 4 elected each year. Salary \$1000 per year. Subject to recall.

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INITIATIVE

Whereby the people can initiate legislation by presenting a petition signed by say 20 per cent. of the electors as indicated at the last election for mayor, demanding that certain proposals be immediately adopted by the Council, or submitted to the people for a vote.

THE

THE MAYOR

CHAIRMAN OF

COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN OF

COMMISSION

Elected from City at large. Two year term. Subject to recall. Salary \$5000 per year.

AND

COMMISSIONER

OF FINANCES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ALDERMAN

Elected from City at large. Two year term. 4 elected each year. Subject to recall. Salary \$1000 per year.

ALDERMAN

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AUDITOR

Appointed by the Council and answerable to that body alone.

LICENSE INSPECTOR

Abolish office.

COMMISSIONER

OF PARKS AND BOULEVARDS

Elected from City at large. Four year term. 1 elected each year. Subject to recall. Salary \$4000 per year.

A PLAN OF GOVERNMENT FOR CALGARY

Streets	Grading Foreman	Men.
	Pavement Foreman	Men.
	Repair Foreman	Men.
Supt. W. Gardiner		
Sewers	Construction Foreman	Men.
	Construction Foreman	Men.
	Connection Foreman	Men.
Supt. P. Breen		
Street Cleaning	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
Supt. Cuddy		
Police Department	Inspector	Constables.
	Inspector	Constables.
	Inspector	Constables.
Chief. A. Cuddy		
Fire Department	Captain	Firemen.
	Captain	Firemen.
	Captain	Firemen.
Chief. James Smart		
Health Department	Sanitary Inspector	Men.
	Hospital-General	Staff.
	Hospital-Isolation	Staff.
Supt. Dr. Lincoln		
Building Department	Plumbing Inspector	Men.
	Wiring Inspector	Men.
	Asst. Inspector	Men.
H. A. Sylvester		
City Clerk	Assistant	Staff.
	Assistant	Staff.
J. M. Miller		
City Solicitor	Assistant	Staff.
	Assistant	Staff.
D. S. Moffatt		
City Engineer	Inspector	To report daily to Engineer upon work in all departments of the city.
	Inspector	
J. T. Child		
City Treasurer	Deputy Treasurer	Treasurer's staff.
	Timekeeper	Asst. Timekeepers.
Thos. Burns		
Purchasing Agent	Assistant	Men.
	Assistant	Men.
Jos. Chandler		
Waterworks Dept.	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
Supt. J. Wilson		
Electric Light Dept.	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
Supt. Brown		
Street Railway Dept.	Assistant	Staff.
	Traffic Inspector	Operators.
	Inspector—Roadway and Equipment	Men.
Supt. T. H. McCaulay		
Parks & Boulevards Dept.	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
	Foreman	Men.
Supt.		
Athletics and Recreations Dept.	Manager	Athletic Grounds.
	Supt.	Children's Playgrounds.
Public Markets Dept.	Assistant Superintendent East End	Men.
	Assistant Superintendent West End	Men.
Supt.		