

COMMISSION GOVERNMENT—(Continued)

new in our Charter excepting that the scope is a little wider.

We have also the preferential ballot.

I have always thought though that it was a good thing for Commission Government in our City that the Charter did not go very deeply into the definition of the Commissioners duties because that would have relieved them much of direct responsibility in their offices. They could have laid failures to the Charter restricting the authority reposed in them.

As it is, our Commissioners had to get together the very first thing they did, to formulate an understanding as to just where collective responsibility ended and individual responsibility began. This was not quite so easy as it might at first be supposed, because all the Departments are so interlaced that in many cases each Commissioner is involved. For example, if the wages of one Department is dealt with the financial department becomes involved directly in book-keeping and other ways and all the Departments become involved by the question of wages that has been raised. This, then, even in minor cases of wage advances, must become a matter of policy and can only be dealt with in a satisfactory way by the Mayor-in-Council.

If a change in some part of the machinery is involved it is a matter of policy and can only be properly dealt with by the Mayor-in-Council.

The Current Years estimates are always dealt with by the Mayor-in-Council, under any form of Municipal Government but everything involved in running a City cannot be included in the annual estimates of either capital or current account. Much of it will arrive later and will have to be dealt with at the moment.

I think I have pretty nearly made it plain that "Policy" which involves the wisdom of the Council covers everything, practically and theoretically, excepting the everyday supervision and management of a Department, by a Commissioner who is responsible.

However, the Commissioner is not relieved by the action of "policy". Far from it. In fact it accentuates his responsibility inasmuch as it is his duty to see that his Department is properly represented in "policy".

If he fails to bring matters to the Council that should be brought there and duly considered and on account of his failure to do his plain duty his Department fails to meet its requirements, the direct responsibility of the failure falls on the Commissioner of that Department.

What I have just said applies to all the Commissioners but it is accentuated in the case of the Mayor, whose duties are a bit wider by Charter definition and very much wider on account of his responsibilities in the financial matters which involve all the other Departments.

Right here is one of the greatest difficulties. The Mayor has to assert himself in authority that may not be well defined or clear and that is objectionable to his co-Commissioners. He is responsible for the City's finance—there is no getting away from that and if his co-Commissioners are not very reasonable he may have to assert himself, in money matters, superior to the whole Council. This has never happened in Lethbridge. However, let us assume a case. Suppose the two other Commissioners got together and decided they would do certain things that involved expenditures that were a matter of "Policy" and out vote the Mayor. At the same time the Mayor was cognizant of the fact that it could not be properly financed. Here is a difficult situation—and the only thing he can do is forbid the work until the money is in sight, but the other Commissioners might use the City's credit until the bills were due and even after that because if the Mayor refused to sign the cheque they could pass a resolution authorizing other parties to sign. The Mayor has one other resource in requesting the Bank not to honour a cheque without his signature. Even then they might induce another Bank to take the account and honour the signature. However, the case is an extreme one and certainly not likely to happen in Lethbridge, but even in the extreme case it is no worse than the result could be in Councilmanic Government. In fact it could not be as bad as in Councilmanic Government because in that form of Government the Mayor or no individual has control over the finance.

As it is in Lethbridge at the present time if the Mayor presents a good case about the difficulty of financing his advice in the matter is final.

The Mayor manages the whole finance of the City and supervises its book-keeping, scrutinizes all accounts and signs all cheques which pay out money. In fact all moneys that come in and go out are directly under his eye. In this way the Mayor is like the other Commissioners responsible for the management and supervision of his Department and he cannot hide behind some binding rule or regulation, but the Charter has many conditions that add largely to his responsibilities in connection with financing but in this respect the other Commissioners are just as much responsible as he because of the legislation by Council that is involved. Again, for example, if Capital money has been received from Bonds sold under a certain by-law and is used for some other purpose than stipulated in said by-law, then the Mayor if he allows it is guilty of malfeasance. If the whole Council is cognizant of it they are all guilty of malfeasance and immediately it is pointed out they are automatically out of office. How many Councils are guiltless of this act of misconduct and still they go on in office because of the difficulty to show it up or because it cannot be attached to them directly.

I have perhaps already taken up too much of your time along these lines and will at once proceed to my concluding remarks.

No form of Civic Government can be better than the men in office and the time they devote to it. A great deal of stress should be laid on the latter part of the last sentence. The very best men may be elected to office but if they cannot devote enough time and thought to the duty involved they will do it but badly. I have been a member of different bodies where voluntary service ran the institution. After short or long meetings I have gone away, after having voted for something of importance with a feeling of dissatisfaction because I felt there had not been enough study given by me on my vote. Later I have found that my mis-givings were all too well founded.

The matter had not been clearly thought out and a blunder—a costly blunder, was the result. There are very few voluntarily managed institutions in the World that are not hampered with poor and extravagant management.

That statement includes Councils. My strongest argument for Straight Commission Government is direct responsibility placed on men who are paid an adequate salary to devote their whole time to the management of the City's affairs, without too many hampering strings such as are frequently attached to the other forms of Government.

It is a well known fact that where directors of a Company take as large a part, as a Council, does, in the management of its affairs it is never a success. "Too many cooks spoil the broth." It is the concentrated responsibility and liberty of thought and action coupled with ability that makes successful management.

This is the strongest argument and perhaps the most logical one for Straight Commission Government. It certainly has been borne out in Lethbridge, where this form of Government took charge when the bottom was clear out of the money bag and debts out-standing were very large and weathered the storm in such a way that it has the commendation of its neighbours, the approval of its bankers and the confidence of the Bond Buyers.

Discussion.

President.—"This interesting paper is really the first report at a convention of this Union of the new style system of administration. It is very interesting, more particularly because of the smallness of the number of commissioners and because of the manner of election. A man must elect to what office he is a candidate. I don't know of any other city having that particular form. It seems a novel idea, and perhaps you get better men to fill office when a man optates what particular office he desires to fill. The public has a better idea whether the men are better qualified for the positions they are running for. We are indeed thankful to you for the information you have given us. I for one would like to have him explain for some of the delegates what he means by the preferential vote."

Mayor Hardie.—"By the preferential vote each individual voter has as many chances as there are candidates for office. If you wanted me for mayor, you would mark me No. 1, if you could not get me, and you wanted some other man, you would mark him No. 2; if not him you would select another. So which ever one was finally elected, you would have some say in the matter. You are required to get over 50 p.c., of the total vote cast before you are elected to any office. If no candidate has 50 p.c., it is necessary to eliminate the last candidate, and his votes are added to the first. In that way you are sure to