

Governing Bodies

County Councils.—County councils, as originally constituted, were composed of reeve and deputy reeves for each five hundred voters in a local municipality. Under this system they gradually became so unwieldy that it was difficult to transact business expeditiously, and the expense of holding meetings was heavy. In some cases the representation in a county council of small incorporated municipalities was out of all proportion to their interests in county taxation. The question of county council reform was considered by the Legislature for a number of years. In 1886 three Bills relating to the subject were introduced in the Legislature. In 1896 a new constitution for county councils was adopted, in which the main idea was that every member should be representative of the whole county. The Act reduced the size of county councils generally, changing the basis of representation from that of local municipalities to districts, into which all the counties were divided by a commission composed of County Judges; the number of districts in each county, varying from four to nine, was determined by population, assessed value, and extent of territory. Two members elected from each for two years formed the county council.

Under the old system, a man's conduct in the local council, with which the people were best acquainted, was the main factor in his re-election. Under the new system, there was a separate nomination day for the election of candidates for the county council, when the ratepayers had an opportunity to consider directly the duties and the expenditures of the county council. The change proved satisfactory, except in counties where it was found impossible to form all the districts out of adjoining municipalities. The more important objection was that the separation of the county council from the local municipal councils lessened the importance attached to the reeveships. The original system, moreover, permitted members of the various local councils to come together and bring their joint experiences to bear on the problems of municipal administration. In this way, no doubt, development of township government was greatly assisted. Many local municipalities were without a resident representative, and it is not surprising that considerable opposition developed from those who were unable to secure election in the districts.

Owing to continual opposition, an optional system was provided in 1903, whereby a majority of the councils of the