

ADVANTAGES OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION BY COMMISSION

(Continued from page 1)

admitted that these and the maintenance of streets, preservation of the health of the community and the financing of large schemes must of necessity require the most expert management. In private business management the very best men are chosen for operation of such enterprises. Not only that but the board of directors of a company, themselves men of wide business grasp and wide business ability, choose for the management of these utilities experts. So it must be in the present day of municipal management.

Now in Britain this need has been largely met by the appointment of a board of Commissioners to take charge of a particular enterprise. That, however, would not be found practicable in Canada, at a large extent, at the beginning of things in Canada, and we might just as well face the situation boldly at the outset. We are, in the very highest ability are today managing huge semi-public facilities for private corporations. Why not employ men of the same calibre for the service of the public? If men can be got to bring to a high degree of success public utilities for private corporations why should we not be able to secure just as high services in favor of the public? If there is anything wrong in the present condition of management, change the management, but by all means let us have the very best.

What then is the principle involved? Simply this: That men specially fitted should be chosen for the management of municipal affairs and should be given the fullest authority, absolute authority to make or unmake, and the credit or blame should fall directly upon them, upon them and them alone rests the blame. The commissioner must be absolutely free from interference by the people or the representatives of the people in the carrying out of municipal activities. If he does well retain his services; if ill, discharge him, but interference never, and by all means give him time to make good before sitting in judgment upon his efforts.

But how can interference be prevented? As surely as the sunrises will the alderman or councillor represent the authority of the commissioner, as surely will he seek to impose his views and methods and grow jealous of the exercise of the powers he gives but should not control. That is the problem. In its solution lies the kernel of the whole situation. In some places it will be solved by the appointment of men of outstanding ability as commissioners. By sheer force of character they will save the situation whatever be the authority under

which they are set to work, but for the most part it must be borne in mind that such men are seldom found in the employ of the public at the present time. The public is a hard master, fickle, often unjust where selfish interests are concerned, often ignorant of that which most should be known, prone to regard the action of those in authority as aimed at the independence of the person, as an interference which private and personal rights. If the man on the streets knew all the interests involved, knew the whole of the question, saw both sides and understood what the whole plan was, he could, for the most part, be depended upon to act pretty fairly. But he does not. He is busy with his own affairs and leaves strictly alone the consideration of public matters. Some day he is met with some petty regulation or straightway thinks the regulation an infringement of his undoubted rights. Or it may be that some friend finds him in that predicament or some one who has a grudge against the civic management, or a personal interest to serve, and an unreasoning prejudice will spring up against the commissioner, and the hostility at the outset. We are, in the wider affairs of life the government is too far removed and his anger is spent. Not so in municipal politics. And the next election puts new men into the council who will send the offending commissioner about his business. Perhaps the new councillor may not dismiss but there is the danger. So the commissioner must be installed with a firm tenure of office. But more is required.

In what way can the jealousy of the alderman, his inherent desire to have a finger in the pie be prevented from marring the results of the ordinary commissioner? Elect better men to the council you answer. Very well if you can, but you must expect the worst while looking for the best, and if you get an indifferent council what then? Grin and bear it. But it might be worth while to try lessening the number of council meetings. In legislature and parliament the private member gets a chance to air his burning issue only at intervals. His activities do not interfere with the carrying out of the policy of the executive for a very long period of time. Why not take a lesson from this and by act of legislature provide that council meetings should be held only three or four times a year? That would certainly lessen their interference with the executive largely, and the very necessity of leaving the commissioners to work out the destinies of the city would require in their choice a greater care. If commissioners were to be chosen for a five year term, with no opportunity for dismissal except for malfeasance in office would not the choice be very carefully made, very carefully indeed? If the council's duties are to be confined

strictly to legislation would not three or four meetings a year be sufficient? That is to say, allow the council to legislate and compel the commissioners to carry out that into effect. But prevent the council from having ready access to interfere with the executive. Let the councillor understand that he is not expected to interfere, is in fact prohibited from doing so, but that after a fair trial he may dismiss if results are not up to the mark.

It has been suggested that provision should be made for a board of control in municipal government, with commissioners under them as permanent heads of departments. It might work well. It would work well if good men were chosen for both bodies. Government by commission would work well without controllers if thoroughly good commissioners could always be found. The theory of the suggestion is to remove as far as possible from the public gaze the real power. Let the power behind the throne rule, let the public kick the man on the throne. There seems to be something in that idea.

And, yet, after all would it not be better to take the courageous course? Face the question and await the time when the public will awake to the fact that to compete with a private corporation or to interest petty politics and jealousies must be thrown aside and the very best men chosen and vested with high authority. Would it not be better just to face the question out in the open and keep it before the people until they thoroughly understand that in order to compete with private management the public must have the very best men to act for them.

Now, the best man qualified to act cannot be got to act for nothing. Neither will they act for the public unless their tenure of service is safe. Men in the employ of large corporations are not subjected to petty annoyances nor capricious criticism, and before such men will take the services for the public the same condition of affairs will have to be brought about. Good men will not brook interference in the discharge of their duties, nor will they take shelter behind the controller. If you want the best men as commissioners do not expect them to obscure their talents behind the controllers or councillors.


Now, what should it mean to have effective government by commission? Take a few concrete examples:—
First: There would be continuity of plan. There would be a constant looking forward to the future and arranging the present accordingly. There would be the choice of thoroughly competent and capable men to take charge of the several departments of the public service. The telephone would be put under a competent head. Likewise the electric light, waterworks, sewerage, public health, road and street making, assessment and collection of taxes, the maintenance of public

order and fire protection. All these departments should be under the commissioners as the business head. Each should be made to work for the benefit of the other. At the beginning of the year when the question of assessment comes around the commissioners should have prepared all necessary data; should have obtained comparisons from all other cities, towns and municipalities similarly situated; should have full information for the council to decide as to the scale of assessment. The commissioners would see that it was carried out. When the roll was completed it would be completed on the principle laid down by the council. The council would be responsible for the principle, the commissioners for the proper carrying out of the principle.

Commissioners should prepare a complete report showing the extent of the development, probable growth cost, number of employees, duties, etc., and the improvements to be made, if any. This would be laid before the council at an early meeting. If approved the necessary legislation would be enacted to carry it into effect. The carrying out into effect would be left wholly to the commissioners and so on all through. The commissioners would provide all the data necessary to enable the council to understand. The council, if satisfied, would provide the necessary funds and the commissioners would carry it out. The councillors should have absolutely nothing to do with the executive part. He should not interfere in any way, shape or form. There should be a strict prohibition against a member of the council directly or indirectly, or for any company in which he is interested, selling goods or property to the city, and the rule should be strictly enforced. Prevent the councillor from doing anything but shape the policy of the city and the small man, the ward healer, the fellow who is in for money or graft will get out. A better class of citizens will take hold. First, because not so much of his time will be required, and second, because he will not be in danger of smirching his reputation by going into the council.

By all means give us municipal government by commission. Make it possible for the best men to serve in council without sacrificing too much of their time. It will take time for the change to be fully accepted. Meanwhile there will be jealousy. The councillor will not like to see his power wane and the best results will not be obtained at once. A new profession—the expert in municipal government—will have to be created, and time will be necessary before the old system is out of date. It will not do for the intricate positions of the present day. Let us at least attempt to bring about a better condition of affairs.

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Calgary has 12 banks, 85 wholesale houses and 25 manufacturing industries. With an educational system which is unequalled. It has 3 fire halls and 3 branch post offices. A street railway is about to be constructed which will serve East, West and South Calgary. This will mean a belt line of about 12 miles in length.

The G. T. P. have declared their intention of reaching Calgary at an early date. The C. N. R. is determined to become established here in the near future. Both companies are fully warranted in putting forth every effort in order to keep pace with the unparalleled development which is taking place in this part of Greater Canada.

Calgary is favorably situated at the foot of the Rockies, with a climate unsurpassed. Watch her grow! Her population in 1890 was 4,000, her population in 1900 was 7500, her population in 1910 will, at a conservative estimate, reach 50,000. Buy Calgary property while you may. It will double and treble itself in price in a short time. It has been the rule in the past and will be the rule in the future. The tremendous influx of immigration compels it. Get in on the ground floor.

The magnificent suburb known as South Calgary, which until recently was under the control of parties in England and which is part of an estate which must be closed up, will now be placed on the market and thrown open to the public. Three thousand lots are now being offered for sale.

Said lots will be sold at prices varying from \$35.00 to \$60.00 per lot, according to location and value. Terms half cash, balance in three and six months, with interest at 8 per cent. Some of these lots are worth \$200.00 each, none less than \$50.00 each. This is the greatest snap ever offered the public. You cannot lose money, you are bound to make money. You cannot help it. It is merely a question of whether you make a profit of 100 per cent. or 800 per cent.

Adjoining this property is the contemplated terminus of Jim Hill's road, which will reach Calgary from Fernie, passing through a splendid coal, timber and mineral district.

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The
W. M.
Editor

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EDITO
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