

Philadelphia has a new Charter. (Continued.)

public sentiment which demanded a sweeping away of the atrocious system."

Philadelphia is now in a position where she can depend upon her policemen to do police work and leave politics alone. Ditto as to firemen. Thus the power and psychology of uniformed office holder bids fair to become a thing of the past. In passing it is interesting to point out that the same legislature which gave the city this large measure of relief and improvement, gave the district attorney the power to employ his own detective force. The significance of this lies in the fact that the police department under political control has frequently been an obstacle rather than an aid in the detection and punishment of crime especially political crime.

For a full generation Philadelphia has had "contractor rule" or "rule by contractors" as one may choose to put it. The same set of men gotten the contracts and have been potential in selecting those who had supervision of them. Certainly a nice arrangement—for the contractors who seem to have profited greatly by the arrangement, both politically and in fine houses and fine raiment and in substantial bank accounts. During the mayoralty campaign (that of 1911) the *Philadelphia Record* declared that one of the contractor bosses was worth at least three millions of dollars and I do not recall that the Editor has withdrawn the statement.

Philadelphia of all the large cities of the country has been allowing contractors, to clean its streets and remove its wastes of various kinds. Hereafter the city shall do these things except in special cases when a majority of all the members elected to the Council, with the approval of the mayor, may authorize and direct otherwise. This great change in public policy is to be borne in mind when reading the praises of the spokesmen of the Vares, when they realized that they could not defeat the Charter. It represents study in political opportunism. State Senator Vare resorted to every known political expedient to defeat the measure. Delay, obfuscation, chicanery, wire-pulling and so on through the whole long list of twisting and turning to which designing political resort—but all to no avail and then their floor leader—one John R. K. Scott, praised the bill and Governor Sproule, who had steadfastly stood by it from the beginning.

Here is one interview with Senator Vare which is illuminating in more ways than one, and interesting, although lacking the pungency that seasoned the utterances of George Washington, Plunkett and Richard Croker. After declaring the measure ridiculous he said:—

"If the new Council wanted the city to do its own work how could it get ready in the middle of the summer?

It will take at least a year to raise the necessary funds to finance such a big enterprise. Plants and equipment will cost the city between \$5,000,000 and \$10,000,000.

"If the charter revisionists had their way, the city would face a situation whereby the job of doing its own street cleaning would be forced upon it with no funds available to carry it out.

"It would be foolish to change the office of Director of Supplies to that of purchasing agent when the department is to remain unchanged. What is there in a title alone?

Everybody had agreed on a Council of twenty-one members at the suggestion of the administration. Without any excuse whatever. Whinston and his friends broke faith and fixed the number at twenty-seven just for the purpose of gaining a fractional advantage.

"The proposal to deprive men of their constitutional rights by prohibiting them from taking any interest in party affairs simply because they hold office under the city is asinine.

"Their rights should be guarded and protected under the constitution the same as those of any other citizen who has interest enough in the affairs of his own city to want to have some say in its government.

"I want to take this opportunity to warn the taxpayers that the taxes will go sky-high, under this bill prepared by impractical people if it should happen to become a law.

"Every person who has had anything to do with the bill will be ashamed of it and trying to run away from it within six months after it is in operation."

The Contractors presented the interesting feature of having certain of its adherents praise the measure (and all of them, with two exceptions voting for it on final

passage) and certain others finding mare's nests in the bill. When the "devil was sick" and all the rest of the doggerel was aptly illustrated.

The chapter on finance effects important and far-reaching reforms. It provides that the mayor shall submit to the Council by October 15th a financial statement showing the estimated receipts, fixed liabilities and proposed expenditures of the city for the ensuing year. The council is required to consider the mayor's statement in open session and by December 15th to pass an ordinance setting forth the financial program for the ensuing year, and at the same time to fix a rate that will produce sufficient funds, together with the funds from other sources, to pay all the fixed liabilities and the current expenditures set forth in the Council's financial program for the ensuing year. The Council required to keep the expenditures of the city within the limits so fixed. Other provisions of the bill prohibiting the city from borrowing money on long-term bonds for current expenses, greatly reduce the mandamus evil and codify and greatly simplify the procedure for incurring indebtedness. Certain accounting reforms that were urged in the original draft were withdrawn by the Committee after objection to their being too technical. The bill, however, gives the city controller entire charge of the accounts of all the city departments and this makes a real unified accounting system possible.

Under the old law the more distinctly social welfare activities of the city are scattered among various departments and boards. The bureau of correction in the department of public safety has control of the house of correction at Holmesburg; the bureau of charities, of the department of public health and charities, manages the general hospital and almshouse; the board of recreation has charge of playgrounds and other recreational activities. Under the new charter all these activities are to be placed under a department of public welfare. This department may be authorized by council to take over other welfare activities also. The creation of this department is in line with modern practice in many cities, notably Kansas City and Dayton. In all of these cities very beneficial results have followed the establishment of welfare departments. The creation of the department of public welfare left the bureau of health as the only bureau in the present department of public health and charities. The bureau is a very large one, containing several divisions—medical inspection, housing and sanitation, dispensaries, vital statistics, child hygiene, food inspection laboratories, and contagious disease hospitals—and is of sufficient importance to be a separate department. The bill accomplished this, at the same time abolishing the present department of public health and charities.

It remained, however, for Senator Vare to point out the iniquity! of such a management. In an interview he said "the charter bill notwithstanding some corrections made by Governor Sproul is still ridiculous. Picture the paupers in the county almshouses and the children in our public playgrounds associated under one department."

Some other features included the shortening of the ballot, by making the city's law officer (the city solicitor) an appointive, rather than an elective one; the creation of a purchasing agent in place of the present Department of Supplies, and provision for a city architect to take over all the routine architectural work of the city. The more important architectural jobs may, however, be handled by outside architects specially chosen by the city architect with the approval of the mayor. Besides co-ordinating a highly specialized part of the city's work now widely scattered among the department, this arrangement will undoubtedly effect a considerable saving in money.

Whence this admirable charter, about 90 per cent of which became a law in the shape in which it was originally drafted? Two years a Charter Committee prepared a series of bills to accomplish the reforms embodied in the Law of 1919. There were nearly a score of them and represented close study, hard work, and a very long step forward—but they fell by the wayside. In fact they did not even get out of the Committee. Senator Vare was "very much on the job" and had a friendly, not to say a docile governor in the Executive Mansion. Senator Penrose was kept in Washington because of the War situation and so Senator Vare took the first set 6-0.

He does not understand the progressive and never will. He's as defective in his psychology as the Prussian after whom he undoubtedly follows in his methods. The charter revisionists were merely delayed in their efforts—not de-

(Continued on page 23.)