



REVIEW OF COMMISSION GOVERNMENT

(Continued)

he loses his seat. Very few commissioners will take such chances.

It is because of these and other defects in the commission system that the National Municipal League introduced the commission-manager form of government under which five or seven commissioners are elected at large. These gentlemen in turn appoint a general manager whose duty it is to administer the community, the commissioners being limited to legislative duties. What I have to say regarding the city manager system is covered in an editorial that appeared in the April issue of the Canadian Municipal Journal.

But what about the working of the commission system in Canada? There are approximately 3,800 rural and urban municipalities in the Dominion, out of which about twenty urban municipalities are administered either under the commission or the commission-manager system. All these cities under the commission system are on the whole well governed, but the question is, are they better governed than the vast majority of Canadian cities and towns that are today administered under the mayor and aldermanic committee system? Our experience tells us that they are not better administered, and our knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon race with its genius for personal responsibility in governmental institutions tells us that municipal government in Canada is not going to be bettered by the introduction of the methods of ordinary business organizations. While I fully recognize that it would be a good thing to introduce more business methods into our municipal administration, it is not a good policy to reduce municipal government (no more than provincial or federal government) down to the dead

level of the business house. Municipal government is something more than mere business—at least in Canada. The success of the government of a city, a town or rural municipality, rests entirely on the public spirit of the citizens, and no form of government only in so far as it expresses the will of the people can be permanently successful.

Lord Bryce, in his "American Commonwealth", published some years ago, stated very emphatically that municipal government in the United States was a failure. Had this distinguished statesman and writer written a "Canadian Commonwealth" he would not have made such a statement regarding municipal government in this Dominion, for the reason that the municipalities of Canada on the whole are as well administered as those of any other country in the world, not even excepting those of Great Britain, whose system of municipal government was adopted in Canada at the time, and in some parts before confederation.

What is wanted in municipal Canada to make it more perfect is not change in the system of government, but more recognition of municipal officers as factors in the development of the community. These men—the municipal clerk, the treasurer, the engineer, the chief of police—are by their very experience authorities in their respective vocations, and should be treated accordingly. They are better fitted to carry out the actual administration of the community than any elected commission, whose members have had little or no experience in departmental duties. The charge that there is no co-ordination between departmental heads may apply equally to the members of a commission, but in practice in most of the cities and towns in Canada there is a real spirit of comradeship between the municipal officers, who only want more responsibility given them to prove their efficiency.