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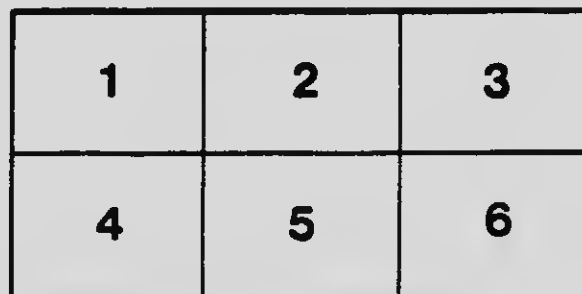
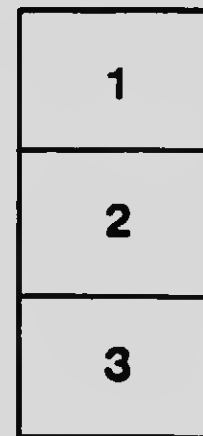
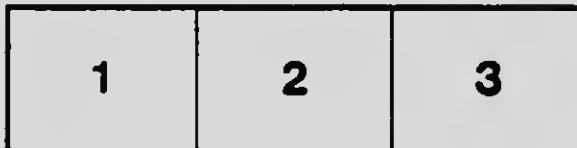
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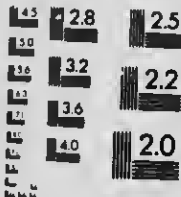
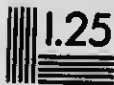
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PREFATORY NOTE

Q The following paper contains the substance of an address before the Canadian Club of Hamilton, delivered in November, 1912.

COMPLIMENTS
S. MORLEY WICKETT.

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City Government By Commission

S. MORLEY WICKETT, Ph. D.

IN the audience, I am told, are a number of members of the Local Council. May I take the opportunity to say a word in their praise. Too many of us sit back and persuade ourselves that we have not the time or the aptitude or the means, or something else to offer ourselves for public work.

In these days when private interests too often crowd out public service, let us give praise where it is due, and express our thanks to those who are doing their part in our Municipal Councils.

In this country the sense of public service seems pretty well developed along certain lines. Our Parliaments are fairly well served, and a great deal of splendid support is given to church and other private philanthropic undertakings. But just in respect of municipal government it must be admitted we are open to some criticism.

THE RUSH TO THE CITY.

Certainly there is ample reason for us to change our attitude. We are accustomed to describe our Canadian population as predominantly agricultural. Yet probably as much as 45 per cent. of our people live in towns and cities of 4,000 and over; while the budgets of some of our cities bulk almost as large as the budgets of their respective provinces, and in the aggregate municipal expenditures form no inconsiderable part, and a rapidly growing one at that, of Canadian public finance. The sales of our municipal bonds 1809-12 reached a total of \$190,000,000, apart from \$30,000,000 held over awaiting a more favorable market. These are big figures.

During the last ten years our rural population increased 17 per cent, but our urban population, that is the people living in places of 4,000 or more, 62 per cent. In the United States the rural increase was 11 per cent, the urban for towns and cities of 2,000 or more, 35 per cent.

As regards urban population, 45 per cent. of our people are so returned as against 53 per cent. in the United States, and these figures are only typical of the world-wide rush to the cities. For example, in 1871, one-fourth of the people in

Germany lived in towns and cities of 5,000 or more, as against over half to-day. In England four out of every five are urban residents. Only 150 years ago the population of London was but half a million, as against upwards of six millions to-day, making it the greatest city of any age.

CITY GOVERNMENT A MODERN PROBLEM.

Just as London, England, in point of population is more or less of a modern city, so City Government on a large scale is a modern problem. It is indeed one of the great problems of modern democracy. The few great cities of antiquity you could count on the fingers of your one hand, and even then their size was not as great as popular imagination often pictures. The town of the middle ages was as a rule a small affair, more of the nature of a fortress, usually walled about and with moat and drawbridge. It was a centre of trade as well as of defence against the barons living in their fortified chateaus. Not until the invention and application of steam do we find great centres of industry and social life everywhere springing up. The steam engine is the father of the modern city. It was therefore about the end of the first quarter of last century that the rush to the town began, accelerating greatly during the past thirty or forty years.

Roads in the medieval town were more like bridle paths, water was procured privately, drainage was by open sewer. When one sallied forth by night one carried like Shakespeare's Romeo, one's own torch, took one's own bodyguard, and on returning home locked the doors, put up the shutters, and trusted to Providence. The chief public concern of the town, outside of defence was the regulation of the local market, weights and measures, etc. How different all this to-day. We must have well-paved roads, underground sewers, street lighting, police, fire protection, fresh water in every house, hospitals, street cars, public libraries, markets, concert halls, municipal pawnshops possibly, etc. etc. It is a new world, this city world, and the end is not yet. From the point of view of municipal organization it means that the problem is not a simple one; and it is just as important as it is intricate.

THE EXAMPLE OF WASHINGTON.

As regards Commission Government a good many Canadians have probably got their first idea from the example of the City of Washington. It was the practice of the late Mr. Goldwin Smith to point to Washington's commission of three, appointed by Congress, as the model for economy and efficiency. In respect of efficiency his reference was apt;

but in our enthusiasm for clean and efficient government we must not be led to overlook what is the real practical problem, namely, how we can get, by popular vote, the best possible government. It is all very well to talk of ideal legislation; the idealist must tell us how to get his ideal men.

Professor Marshall, the dean of English Economists, was once asked his opinion as to the usefulness of such books as More's "Utopia," and Bellamy's "Looking Backward." His reply was they were so unreal and out of touch with practical conditions that they were of comparatively little practical value, and might be quite misleading. In the same way Washington as model, may easily lead us to overlook the very essence of the problem to which we have addressed ourselves, namely, democracy in action. And on this point Washington is, of course, silent. In other words, to solve our problem we must discover how we can secure the best men available for the three classes of work called for, legislative, administrative and technical.

The United States is the world's great experiment in democracy, and so we turn with interest to any form of Government that has been tried there with even a modicum of success. But before referring in detail to the experiment of City Government by Commission in that country let us see how Municipal Government is carried on in Europe, especially as it is usually well done there.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN EUROPE

The Council.—Everywhere a fairly large Council is retained as the legislating body; committees in one form or another do the administering, and officials the technical work. One difference between Europe and ourselves in this respect is that Europe has well-defined traditions as to this division of work, whereas we are only developing them. A striking example with us is the frequent jealousy between Committees of Council and our Boards of Control. But friction of this kind will doubtless pass away as our organization and traditions mature.

In Europe the council's chief business is to legislate, that is, to discuss and decide policy. The number of councillors is larger than with us. In France it runs from ten to thirty-six, though Paris has eighty and Lyons forty-four; English councils range generally from nine to seventy-two; the minimum for Prussian Councils is thirty, with roughly an additional six for each fifty thousand above a population of ten thousand. Berlin's Council has 144; Leipzig 72, etc.

French Councils are elected for four years, the English for three years, one-third retiring annually, the Prussian for

six years, one-third retiring every two years. Salaries are never paid, though France permits a limited allowance for expenses, which are, however, slight, in that elections are held only once in four years. About ten per cent. of the French cities have wards; elsewhere wards are uniformly found.

Municipal Administration, France.—Whatever it is in practice in the popular mind Commission government is government by experts instead of by amateurs. Any country approaches that ideal the greater the importance it attaches to the work of its administrators and of its departmental heads. In France the administrative heads are a Prefect representing the Central Government, and a Mayor, selected by the Council from its own members, and like the Council, holding office for four years. The Mayor appoints and may suspend or dismiss all officials except the Treasurer. The Prefect chooses the Treasurer from a list of three submitted by the Council. In keeping with the method of his appointment the Treasurer's annual report is made direct to the Court of Accounts, a kind of central statistical office for the public finances of France.

An unsalaried Administrative Board appointed by the Council from among its own members assists the Mayor; the size of the Board varying with the population. Cities of ten thousand have two controllers, or adjoints, as they are called, one additional controller up to a maximum of twelve is allowed for each further twenty-five thousand of population. The City of Lyons is an exception, with seventeen. The number of civic departments is usually the same as the number of adjoints.

The Prefect, as representative of the national government, acts as general supervisor, and has wide discretionary powers. However, he rarely uses these directly, and in any event his actions are always subject to revision by interpellation in the Chamber of Deputies. At the same time he is an influential part of French municipal government. Over the police he has special supervision, the civic budget is submitted to him, to him the annual reports are made, and his approval must be had for franchises and bond issues. As the main roads in France are in charge of the National Government the franchises affecting them are matters for the direct approval of the Government, a provision which incidentally safeguards the country against conflicting local interests and privileges. All countries, including ourselves, evidently come to the same conclusion with regard to central

supervision, though in each country a different road is followed.

Municipal Administration, England—Since the great Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, Municipal Administration in Merrie England has been brought to a fairly high state of efficiency by an orderly process of development. In this respect English municipal history goes to show that in order to transform a corrupt and inept administration into an honest and efficient one, it is not necessary to clean the slate and begin all over again. The English reformers secured what they were after by recognizing more definite units of local authority, professional responsibility for heads of departments, and a gradual adaptation of supervision and control by the Central Government.

The strong arm of the English Council is its standing Committees, co-operating with the professional departmental heads, Committee and professional heads of departments are thus the operating end of English Municipalities. The Mayor is elected by the Council from among its own members, and is regarded rather as the social and philanthropic head than as Chief Administrator. However, it is quite open to an exceptional man to make an exceptional Mayor, as witness Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, when Chief Magistrate of Birmingham. An allowance is usually made to the Mayor for expenses. The Lord Mayor of London, for example, receives ten thousand guineas, in addition to the upkeep of the Mansion House, which means another eight to ten thousand pounds. But a Lord Mayor's charitable and social disbursements usually exceed any allowance made him by a substantial amount.

ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARDS.

Over the English cities and between them and Parliament stand a number of local government boards which have gone far toward realizing non-political business efficiency in connection with municipal affairs. Mentioning the two most important ones last, they are :

1. The Board of Education.
2. The Board of Agriculture for epidemics among animals, local fisheries, etc.
3. The Home Office, which administers directly the London police and by reason of the percentage it pays to each municipality to secure local police efficiency is able to bring pressure to bear on the whole constabulary of the country.
4. The Board of Trade, which has more special supervision of public utilities; issues "provisional orders" (sub-

ject to confirmation by Parliament), and lays down conditions for the operation of municipal activities affected by these orders. The "Provisional Orders" greatly facilitate municipal action.

5. The Local Government Board, the most influential of all, with a wide range of work. Since 1871, when it was organized in its present form its powers have been extended, altered and re-arranged by over a hundred different statutes. It, too, saves Parliament's time by issuing "orders" subject to confirmation later by Act of Parliament; it supervises Poor Law authorities; prepares model by-laws, has extensive veto powers in case it finds that municipal legislation is ultra vires and in this way has even the means of preventing such litigation; approves municipal loans, may be freely consulted on technical or other matter by parliament as well as by the smallest municipality.

No limit is fixed to municipal debts, but all bond issues must have the approval of the Board, which is given subject to strict provision for sinking funds. It provides for the audit of all municipal accounts with the exception of those of London and of the boroughs. But from all municipalities without exception it requires full financial returns on prescribed forms, from which it publishes yearly a valuable municipal statistical review.

As regards the Referendum in England, or for the matter of that, in Europe, almost the only instance is in the case where a municipality in promoting a private bill before Parliament has to provide for the necessary expenses. But even here action is subject to the supervision of the Local Government Board.

These various expert local government boards have proved to be most helpful to municipalities and indispensable to Parliament. That even further centralization may take place is suggested by the policy of police administration. For example, since 1882 no borough with a population under twenty thousand may establish a separate police force; and since 1888 the policing of all boroughs under ten thousand has been placed in charge of the counties.

Municipal Administration, Prussia.—The Prussian Municipal machinery is also most interesting because of its professional administrators. The Mayor stands out as professional administrator and municipal head. The Council selects him in the same way as an English Council does a departmental head.

The practical career of a German Mayor begins in some Mayor's office. The young clerk is in training as a professional municipal administrator. On completing his apprenticeship he answers an advertisement and let us say, is appointed Mayor of some small town. If successful he goes on in the same way to some larger place. If he again makes good he may be invited to become Mayor of one of the great cities, and is possibly decorated by the Emperor and his name becomes widely known. The professional prospects of such a career are certainly stimulating.

Mayors are usually appointed for twelve year terms, and receive handsome pensions. Some cities (Berlin, for example), have two mayors, a senior and an assistant. As associates with the Mayor the Council appoints a number of expert salaried Administrators, each of whom is assigned to a special department for which he has been specially selected. It is also customary for the Council to appoint to the Administrative Board certain honorary members, a practice it follows also with its own Committees. This admirable custom allows the German city to secure for itself the direct co-operation of citizens specially interested in given municipal activities.

SOME DETAILS OF ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION.

In the larger cities usually about one-half of the administrators are salaried; in the smaller cities the majority are usually unpaid. The number of paid administrators is decided by the Council, but the law limits the number of honorary ones according to population. In general the number of paid administrators varies from about one-quarter to one-third the number of councillors. For instance, Berlin has besides its two Mayors a council of one hundred and forty-four, seventeen paid and seventeen unpaid administrators. The paid administrators are usually appointed for twelve year terms. The provision for pensions to municipal officials is most important, in securing the right class of municipal servants. After twelve years' service an administrator may retire on a pension of half his salary; after twenty-four years with a pension equal to his full salary; while in case of his prior decease provision is made for his widow. Through the good offices of Royalty and by virtue of healthy conditions of public opinion, a measure of distinction attaches to public service in Germany, which is quite unknown in the New World and counts for much.

Patronage is reduced to a minimum. Paid employees are appointed by the administrative board, which first lays

their names before the Council for its opinion; unpaid ones by the Council. Only a few officials, for example, heads of the police and educational departments, require central confirmation, which is rarely withheld. There are no civil service requirements, but for high offices certain professional qualifications are exacted. Sometimes qualifying examinations are required, but they are not competitive. The Mayor, as Chairman of the Administrative Board is only *primus inter pares*; yet if any measure is regarded by him as contrary to public interest he may, subject to appeal, declare it out of order.

In actual practice the Committees of Council always presided over by a member of the Administrative Board, do a fair share of the work. A committee is usually made up of one or two paid administrators, one or more departmental officials (who speak but may not vote), and one or more unpaid citizen deputies selected by the Council for six year terms with full voting rights. Only appointees to the educational committee require government confirmation.

CENTRAL SUPERVISION IN PRUSSIA.

As in France and England, there is a considerable measure of central supervision. For administrative purposes Prussia is divided into twelve provinces, which are made up of districts, and these of circles. The district authorities are concerned more with the larger cities; the circle more with the smaller places. Between central supervision in Prussia and England there is this characteristic difference; in England a city may make its final appeal to the people's representatives in Parliament; in Prussia the last word lies with the administrative tribunals.

SOME RESULTS IN PRUSSIA.

Altogether the Prussian system is calculated to enlist the services of enthusiastic amateurs, reflect public opinion, and generally meet the demand for expert direction. It is to municipalities so organized that, subject to other state laws and activities, powers of local self government are given in the form of a general grant. As in France and England wide powers can be conferred with confidence, relying on the co-operation of the supervising boards of officials. In addition there is full provision for audit and for publication by the state of a complete summary of municipal finance, which keeps public opinion well informed. No one but agrees that the Prussian municipal organization has yielded efficient, clean and popular Government.

EUROPEAN CAPITALS.

Their special importance, the existence there of official headquarters, and much other national property have led most European Governments to give somewhat special constitutions to their respective Capitals. Berlin, for example, stands directly under the Administrative supervision of the Prussian Government. In Paris there is a species of expert Administrative Board appointed directly by the Central Government and co-operating with the Municipal Council. Moreover, each of the twenty wards into which the city is divided is under an Administrative Board of a Mayor and three adjoints appointed by the Government. The large Municipal Council confines itself to general measures of policy.

As for London, since 1888 it has been under the London County Council, with 118 members elected every three years, and 19 aldermen elected by the Council itself, but Parliament looks with some suspicion on the well-known radical proclivities of the London County Council, and as a result gas and electric lighting, water supply, poor relief and police are under the care of special authorities.

EUROPEAN ADMINISTRATION VS. COMMISSION SYSTEM.

Bad practices may masquerade under an ideal form; and ideal practices and results may be discovered under old-fashioned names. In one form or another European municipalities appear to get pretty much what is sought for in America by the Commission system, and in addition they have the advantage of control by a representative Council. As for initiative and recall, these measures would probably prove overly cumbersome for metropolitan cities. In any event to European countries a proposition for Commission Government would be unintelligible. Why it finds more favorable reception on this side of the water can only be explained by the shortcomings, immaturity and unfortunate plight of Local Government here. In other words, to understand the run of the tide of Municipal Reform in the direction of Commission Government one must go back a little and take a glance over the history of Local Government in America.

HOW COMMISSION GOVERNMENT WAS LED UP TO.

According to the canons of Jacksonian democracy, the people and the people only, must be supreme. They believe that :

" You can fool some people all the time,
You can fool all the people some of the time,
But you can't fool all the people all the time."

So there was to be popular election not only of Councilors, but of all important officials. The bare possibility of an official class, of an official aristocracy, was to be obliterated. As the cities expanded and the number of municipal officers multiplied, the electoral ballots took on huge proportions. The ordinary man could no longer know for whom he was voting. In the end the candidates became grouped politically and the citizen could then vote a straight ticket by a simple cross at the head of a column. The ward-boss became a man of might. Election to office meant patronage, and an appointee's " pile " had to be made within a short time. Graft, inefficiency and deficits were the inevitable outcome, and City Government became in Mr. Bryce's words, often quoted " the one conspicuous failure of the United States.

THE BIRTH OF COMMISSION GOVERNMENT

The story of the birth of Commission Government has been frequently told.

Thirteen years ago the small city of Galveston, Texas, through years of deficits, had accumulated a heavy debt. Then came the tidal wave of 1900, devastating the city. As a council of despair the Governor of the State united with a committee of citizens and placed the city in the hands of five liquidators, three appointed by himself, two elected by the people. Later on it was found that according to the State Constitution all five Commissioners, as they were called, must be elected. The success of the Commissioners, who with the exception of the Mayor, have ever since been continued in office, was in marked contrast to the past, and aroused the attention of neighboring cities. To these it seemed an open sesame from the sloughs in which they found themselves. The obstacles to the change were not so serious as might at first be expected, in that in Texas and other Southern States no matter what system was tried out no change in political control could result, in that the South was undeniably Democratic.

During the first six years, that is until 1907, less than ten small cities followed the example set; but since that time over 140 or more villages, towns and cities in thirty-four of the forty-eight States have abandoned their old form of Government in favor of the Commission plan. Twenty-five per cent. of these municipalities are to be found in Texas and

Kansas; another twenty-five per cent. in Oklahoma, Illinois and California. Most of the places are small, only a dozen have fifty to one hundred thousand; only five over one hundred thousand (Birmingham, Ala., with 132,000; Memphis, Oakland and Spokane with somewhat less, and New Orleans, the latest and biggest recruit with somewhat over 300,000). Grouping the populations together a million and a half people in the United States live under this simple, ready-made Municipal system, and by so doing have registered their protest against "the right divine of democracy to govern wrong."

COMMISSION GOVERNMENT DEFINED

What is City Government by Commission? It is government by a small council of from three to five members, including the Mayor, usually elected for from two to four years. The Mayor has no special veto powers. Each councillor acts also as administrator and has charge of a special department of work, for which he is directly responsible, is paid a salary and usually devotes his whole time to the work. Wards are abolished.

In choosing the Council there is a double election, made up of a primary and a final. In the final ballot are re-submitted only the names of the two highest for Mayor and the eight highest for Councillor, four of whom are to be elected. Names of candidates on the ballot papers are arranged in alphabetical order, and all party designations are disallowed. The Civil Service Board supervises appointments by the Council, and consists of three members, appointed for six years, but removable by a four-fifths vote of the Council. Popular control is further secured by annual audits, periodical itemized reports, and these again by the initiative, referendum and recall.

Under these last oft mentioned measures twenty-five per cent. of the number of electors at the last preceding election can have any proposition considered by the Council or voted on by the people. This is the initiative. The referendum means that under like conditions any ordinance of the Council unless withdrawn must be submitted to popular vote. Similarly, under the recall any Councillor must resign or stand for re-election within forty days. All resolutions of the Council, moreover, must be posted a week before being adopted and cannot go into force for ten days after being passed. Municipal appointments as in Canada, are permanent, subject frequently to some civil service requirements.

This outline is the developed or Des Moines plan which

was formulated in 1907, though there is still considerable variation from place to place. For example, in Galveston the Commissioners give only part of their time. In Houston and other Texan towns they are paid more and devote their entire time. Here too, the Mayor's powers are so enlarged that he becomes a kind of General Manager appointing all heads of departments except the comptroller (whom the Council selects.) In Galveston, franchises are granted by the Commissioners; in Houston, they are decided by popular vote, etc.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FROM THE UNITED STATES.

This Commission system is of course only one of many forms of municipal organization which have been or are being tried out in the great Republic to the South. The earliest municipal system there was of course transplanted from England. But it has long since given way to the so-called Federal Plan, modeled after the Federal Constitution in which the legislative, executive and judicial branches are separate. This Federal Plan yielded in turn to the Board system under which certain municipal undertakings were transferred to special Boards more or less independent of the local Council; such as Boards of Police, Health, Fire, Water, etc. Later on this was in part changed in favor of the Mayoral system under which the Mayor becomes the dominating influence. Finally sprang up the Small Council or Commission system.

NEWPORT TOWN MEETING.

This progression does not exhaust the list. There is, for example, the limited town-meeting or Newport plan, an attempt to adapt the New England town-meeting to city conditions. According to it a body of about two hundred (thought large enough to prevent cabals, small enough to allow of general discussion), is elected for three years, one-third retiring each year. The Chairman of this body appoints a committee of twenty-five to prepare the budget. On petition, referendums are provided for. General administration is then left in the hands of a small council, consisting of a Mayor and one alderman from each of the five wards.

LOCKPORT'S G. M.

Then there is the Lockport plan, laying emphasis on the importance of a general manager. Here five aldermen are elected at large for five years, subject to recall, with provision for initiative and referendum. The Board selects a city

manager who, in turn, subject to certain civil service rules appoints all employees except those in the Department of Education.

BOSTON'S DECISION.

Among other forms of city government under experiment Boston's may be mentioned. In 1910, when its charter was under revision, the commission plan was considered and unanimously rejected by the Committee having the matter in hand. The decision was for a council of nine elected at large for three years, one-third retiring each year. The Mayor is elected for four years, subject to recall at the end of two years. Five thousand signatures are necessary for any candidate. The Mayor has absolute power to appoint heads of departments, subject to the approval of a Civil Service Board; while a State Board of Inspection looks after municipal reports and publicity. Even such a constitution scarcely bears the ear-mark of completeness or finality.

THE SITUATION IN CANADA.

In Canada municipal government has sailed on an even keel. Outside of Quebec, municipal organization follows more closely the English model, but as in the United States reform lags behind the motherland. However, Canadians have never adopted the practice of electing their municipal officials, and still believe that in this and other respects they are not, and never have been, quite so bad as "those Republicans." But the time for this self-complacency has gone by.

In several of the larger cities, attempts at improved Administration have been made by means of small Boards of Control, elected by the city at large and salaried; but the results have not been up to anticipations. Taking advantage of the experience of the East in this respect on the advice of the late Mr. Biggar, for many years City Solicitor of Toronto, several cities in the west have adopted the plan of an elective Council, which in turn appoints the Administrators, or Commissioners, as they are called. Decision on the more important issues are reserved for popular vote. Elsewhere in a few instances the Des Moines plan has been boldly adopted.

So far the Canadian experiment of division of work between the Council as a legislating body and a special Administrative Board may be said to be still incomplete. For example, apart from Montreal, no definite decision has been come to as yet with regard to the part that Committees of Council should play. Moreover, with such a haphazard board as is usually elected, there is an inevitable lack of

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division of work, and also a lack of confidence between it and Council, which is increased by the frequent inability of controllers to answer questions in council as to their own recommendations. Indeed, looking the problem straight in the face, experience has already made it clear that capable Administrators, that is, men not necessarily possessed of technical knowledge, but with those peculiar gifts for supervision and management of technical heads which means so much for business success, cannot be secured by popular election no matter what the salary attached to the office. If the logic of facts and the judgment of the late city solicitor of Toronto were followed, an effort would be made to convert popularly elected Boards of Control into Boards of Administrative experts, appointed by, and holding seats in the Council. Just how such a Board could be organized to co-operate with sub-committees of the Council would then be matter for detailed consideration. Such a plan, apart from the Mayor, would be practically a counterpart of the admirable and efficient German system.

For the present it would help matters greatly if to every Board of Control was attached a strong executive officer or secretary, who, from his strategic position, would be a kind of municipal manager, guiding, assisting and strengthening in many ways and giving cohesion to what is now fragmentary and amateurish. He could be a sort of permanent Mayor, a Deputy-Mayor, if you will.

A LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD.

On the division of authority between the Province or State and the Municipality, the Commission plan throws no light. Yet in order to avoid political or unsympathetic interference there is need for a more general grant of Municipal powers. As has proved to be the outcome in England and in Europe generally, sufficient control can be exercised through some such body as the English Local Government Board. Already we have the hesitating beginnings of such in Ontario, in the Provincial Railway and Municipal Board. But that Board has hardly yet fitted itself in as a normal feature of Ontario municipal organization. Such a Board should be the means of bringing about unity of statistical tabulation and audit, as well as offering the means for expert advice on matters of policy to every Municipality seeking it. It ought to be the keystone of our Municipal development.

WHAT OF THE COMMISSION SYSTEM?

The chief virtue of the Commission System in the United States is that it has swept away many of the impediments to

municipal reform and points an ideal. That some wise men from the United States' West should now preach Commission Government as a cure-all can therefore be regarded as a pardonable weakness. The greater definiteness of responsibility and a number of other good features are certainly welcome reforms. But already municipal students in the United States are coming to see that after the first wave of enthusiastic reform flowing from an aroused and active public opinion Commission Government settles down to Government by pretty much the same caliber of men as formerly.

Indeed, speaking generally as regards the type of citizen whom we may expect to enter our municipal councils, it would seem as if we must make up our minds that, generally speaking, they will be men of the younger set, or men who have still to win their spurs. In other words, municipally we must get along as a rule without the direct help of "leading citizens." But these latter must recognize that the next quarter century of constructive city government in Canada offers a magnificent field for public service.

A good many people rely on the referendum, initiative and recall to safeguard municipal interests. Such votes are useful in a crisis, but in practice the two first at least mean little more than reference to the popular vote at the regular annual elections. At other times people will not turn out to vote. Moreover to secure a petition signed by a substantial fraction of the electors would be a practical impossibility in a large city. But the power of recall seems a wise provision to have as a reserve remedy for any city in case an undesirable alderman once gets elected. As regards the Municipal Council itself, it is beyond question a valuable feature and a helpful influence in our great school of Democracy. To let it disappear would mean a loss that probably could not be replaced by any other democratic institution. And not only to abolish the traditional Council, but to place both legislative and administrative work in the hands of a small elective Board of three, four or five men of the standing of our average Municipal Councillor would be a reactionary, fatuous policy, which before long must bring serious financial and other results. Another conclusion might, of course, be come to if some new way is discovered of making sure of "plus" men being secured as Commissioners. But that is the whole question. If we had our ideal men as councillors there would be no problem at all!

In actual practice so-called Commission Government is then not Government by experts, but Government by much

the same class of men whom we now elect. A review of experience and results to date in Commission cities in the United States and in Canadian cities under elected Boards of Control suggests that we should retain our municipal councils as at present, except that we should elect them for longer terms of office, say, as in England, three years, one-third retiring each year. The question as to the length of tenure of the Mayor as the honorific head of the city is in a sense not so important, though a two year term would seem advisable and conformable to the views of the electorate as expressed at the polls for many years back by their re-electing any fairly satisfactory Mayor. But the point is, by abolishing annual elections to do away with an annoying, discouraging, harmful and unnecessary interruption to the routine of work by our civic representatives.

The Councillors should be entrusted with the work of appointing well-salaried, administrative experts for a still longer period, these holding seats in the Council and co-operating with and presiding over the chief committees of council. That at least would constitute true government by commission, which simply means democratic business government. And if we add to that a little more attention to classification in municipal book-keeping, and, for popular instruction, the publication of clear, comparative reports on the various municipal services, we will have fortified reform.

But if public opinion holds to elective Boards of Control, controllers should still follow the Commission principle and with a fair salary allocate among themselves accountability for the several civic departments, and by acting as chairmen of standing committees, help carry the sympathy and co-operation of Council to a greater extent than I believe is usually done to-day. Organization, responsibility, publicity—these are serviceable tests of any form of government.

On the whole a discussion of the Commission System has the great merit of helping to shake us out of our self-complacency and apathy. In this constructive period of Canadian City Government the more vigorous the shaking the better, if we are to free ourselves from a number of old habits and see business principles govern.

