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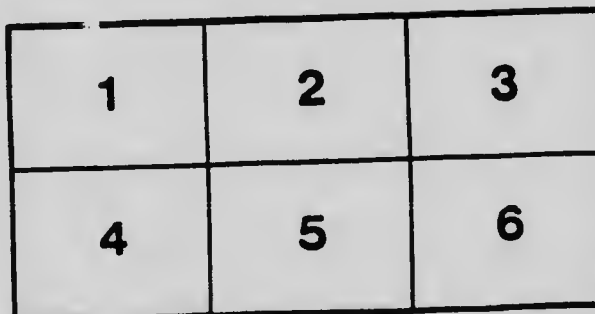
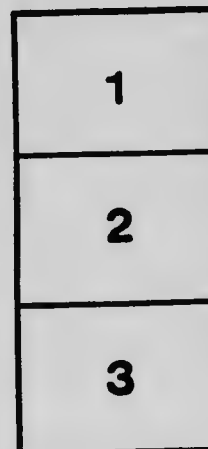
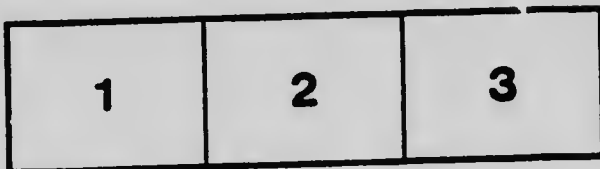
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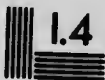
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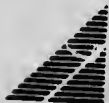
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1911-6

# “What is Commission Government”

# ?

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THIS PLEBISCITE on JANUARY  
12th, 1911, is the most important issue  
that has ever been put to the vote of  
the people of Vancouver.

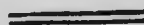
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WHEN YOU HAVE READ THIS PAMPHLET PLEASE HAND  
IT TO A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOR.

On January 12 at the Municipal Election,  
A three-question Plebiscite will be sub-  
mitted, the questions reading in substance  
as follows:--

1st Are you in favor of our present form of  
Government, namely, a Board of 12  
Aldermen and a Mayor?



2nd Are you in favor of a Board of Aldermen  
with, or assisted by, a Board of Control  
of 4 Controllers and the Mayor?



3rd Are you in favor of a Commission  
Government consisting only of 5 Com-  
missioners, one of whom is the Mayor?

# What does Commission Government Mean ?

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Civic Government by Commission, as it is generally termed, simply means a reduction of the number of members of our present somewhat unwieldy board of aldermen, and the placing of all municipal affairs in the hands of a Council or Commission of five capable men, elected by general vote for a period of from two to four years. These men, who may be called either Councilmen or Commissioners, are clothed with ample power, and are made directly responsible for every incident in connection with civic administration.

They are paid reasonable salaries and would devote all of their time to the management of the city's business.

The business would be divided into five departments, something after the manner of the chart appearing on another page of this pamphlet.

One councilman is placed as manager of each department, and is held individually responsible for everything pertaining to that department. Full responsibility for all departments also rests with the council of five, who meet every other day and form the legislative as well as the executive body of the city; all meetings are open to the public. One of these men holds the office of Mayor of the city and is chairman of the meeting.

A term of four years has been chosen by the later cities adopting this plan and municipal elections are held every alternate year.

If a vacancy occurs through resignation or death, the other four members appoint a fifth to fill the vacancy until the next election, when such new member must be endorsed or rejected by the electorate.

The question naturally arises: Is it right to entrust so much authority to five men for such a long period? This is taken care of in the system of

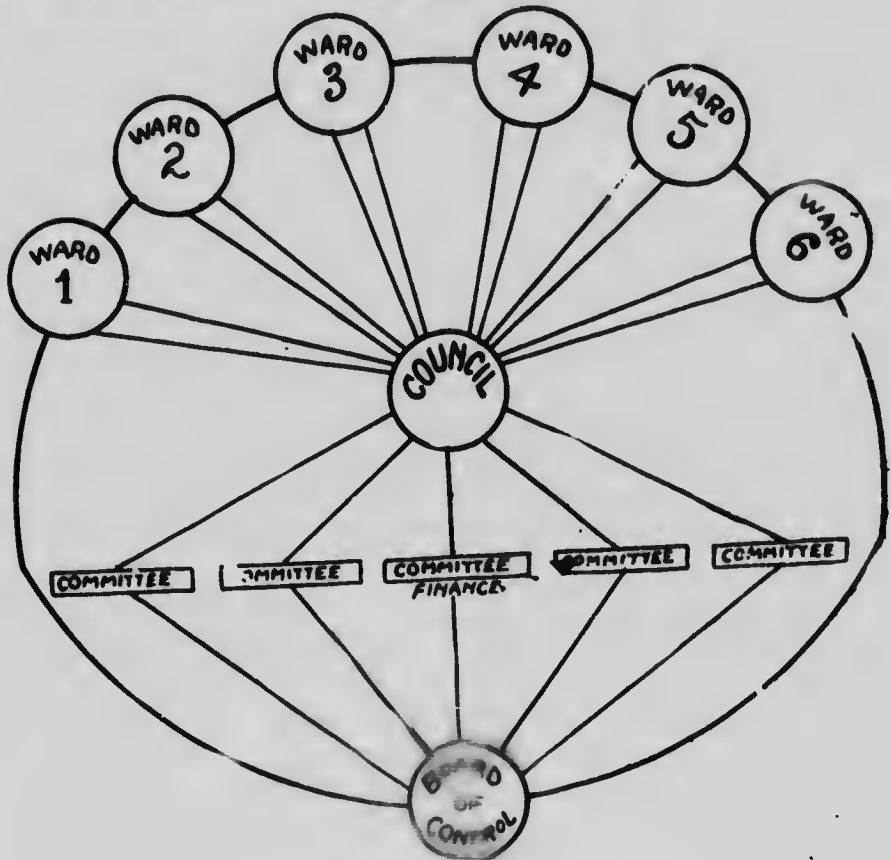
## DIRECT LEGISLATION

or the features of Initiative, Referendum and Recall, which are part of the plan of Commission Government.

# BOARD OF CONTROL

## NO INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Note how a Ratepayer with a grievance can be referred from one body to another



### THE RESPONSIBILITY.

is the authority of the electorate to legislate in a manner similar to that used in putting a motion in an order of business meeting. If any voter has an idea that he wishes put through—and can get sufficient backing—the suggestion or motion is put to a vote. If endorsed by the electorate, it becomes law.

In connection with this feature it is well to state that it is not likely that it would ever be necessary to use the petition. Its mere existence in the charter



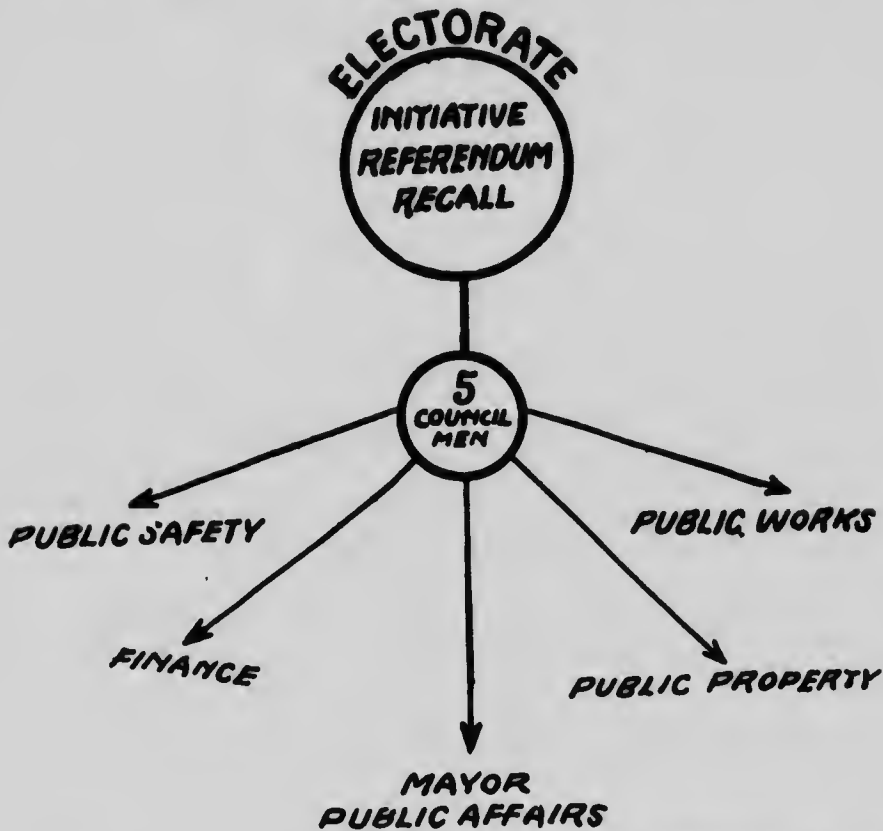
# COMMISSION GOVERNMENT

## DIRECT INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Note how you can lay your finger on the one man who is responsible in each case



is enough to keep the Commissioners alive to any good suggestion that comes from the electorate, through ratepayers' associations or other accredited channels.

### REFERENDUM

Every ordinance or by-law passed by the Council must be laid on the table for from ten to thirty days, and if during this interval a number of voters object to this by-law, they may, upon presentation of a petition signed by 15% of the

voters who voted at the last election for mayor, have the objectionable by-law referred back to the electorate to be endorsed or rejected by the majority of the vote. In connection with the Referendum, all money by-laws and all public franchises must be referred to the electorate without the necessity of a petition.

## RECALL

is the authority of the electorate to request, by petition, any member of the Commission or Council to resign or offer himself for re-election. If the petition is signed by 25% of the voters who voted for mayor at last election, then the Commissioner named must offer himself for re-election within forty days, but if the petition bears only 15% of the voters who voted for mayor, then the Commissioner named will not have to offer himself for re-election until the next municipal election.

These petitions must be signed by qualified voters, each giving his street address. The petitions must be examined by the City Clerk within ten days after presentation. If it is not sufficiently signed, it is handed back and additional names may be secured within a reasonable length of time.

Should anyone think that the petition would be abused by irresponsible parties signing for friends, etc., it is well to remember that the abuse of the petition would be the same offence as the abuse of the ballot box, with the essential difference that in the case of the petition the signature and residence of the one guilty of the offence is there to convict him. Under these conditions citizens would be very careful what they were signing, and any such petition would have to have a just cause behind it in order to get the necessary support.

On the other hand, the Commission knowing that they are at all times so directly responsible to the electorate, would use their office to serve the people to the best of their ability, exactly the same as a manager employed by a private company, and only in an extreme case would it be necessary to resort to any one of the petitions above referred to.

In this way we have what is called Direct Legislation—the people themselves are the governing body, and an office holder cannot misrepresent his supporters—and at the same time we have a small body of competent business managers at the head of the affairs of the city. Financial reports are published monthly in some cities, and any voter may keep himself informed as to the use of public funds if he chooses to do so.

In a word, Government by Commission is nothing more or less than the application of the most modern business methods to the business of the city.

Chas. Sangster.

# The History of Commission Government

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Commission Government, like many another good thing, was found by chance. For a hundred years the cities of America were cursed with a civic government, usually extravagant and wasteful, often corrupt, and always grossly incompetent and futile. Year after year, city after city has come into the limelight, with its record of vice and corruption—at once the most repulsive and the most characteristic feature of municipal government in America. In every case "the ward system" has been the prime factor making the whole system possible. Stung to action by these conditions, the people have from time to time risen in their wrath, and placed the appropriating hand of public necessity upon the shoulders of "good men" and put them into office. Only to be met with the same repetition of the same discouraging evils. Wise men seemed to become foolish, economical men seemed to become extravagant, clean men seemed to become venal, and the pick of the people seemed to become discredited. Why? Because the ward system is superior to the aldermen; they are its creatures. Because the ward system, with its jealousies, its unbusinesslike machinery, its lack of individual responsibility, is by nature the mother of incompetency and corruption. The trouble is only incidentally in the aldermen; it is essentially in the system.

So with no alternative to ward government, city folk settled down to endure, as best they might, the irremediable evils of city life.

Then a convulsion of nature devastated a Texan city called Galveston. The mayor and aldermen were powerless and gave up. Five citizens usurped autocratic power, and went to work to rebuild their city just as five business men would go to work to re-establish a burnt-out business. They restored the city, restored her credit, her public works, and made adequate provision against the possibility of another calamity. In short, they worked what seemed to be a municipal miracle, but what was in reality nothing more nor less than an ordinary big business enterprise.

Des Moines went a step further. To this business like way of governing a city, they added a safeguard and made the governors responsible to the rate-payers. (See Initiative, Referendum and Re-call.) In short, Des Moines retained all the benefits of an autocratic government, but at the same time, by putting the power constantly and in working form into the hands of the people, obtained the most democratic form of government ever devised for the rule of a city.

In a word, Des Moines gave up the so-called responsible or representative government, and got for itself self-government.

This was three brief years ago, and yet so successful has Commission Government been that 94 cities and towns of the United States and Canada now have it, and 140 odd are after it.

Every city that has tried it has found the plan most satisfactory, and even those public men who have opposed the change, have been converted and have endorsed the system when they saw the results obtained.

In Canada the following cities have voted in favor of it: Guelph, St. Catherines, Lethbridge and Calgary.

Vancouver is just on the eve of Greater Vancouver. Let us have a business government. Let us have self-government—in short, let us have Commission Government.

Dr. A. L. Johnson.

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## Mr. Shannahan on the Board of Control

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"This Board iv Control scheme," said Mr. Shannahan, "is simply the hobbling iv a herd iv lame horses; and if they can't pull the load before being hobbled, is it reasonable to expect that they can do it afterwards?"

"What the city should do is to dispose iv the whole bunch iv broken-down, spavined and incapable nags, and in their place put a nice, new up-to-date motor truck that will do the work iv the whole lot iv thim, and do it promptly and efficiently. Then the city will have the Commission form iv Gover'mint or I'm no judge iv modern locomotion.

"The trouble up to the present has been that we have been trying to do a Standard 112 business on a pay-nut stand basis.

"A Commission form of Gover'mint would place the city's affairs on the same sound, sane and systematic basis as those iv a large private corporation. Efficiency, honesty, economy and system would be it's thray distinguishing features. It would mane no more misfits in office; it would mane the chasing iv the pig out iv the pulpit.

"Iv course, opinions differ on this subject as they do on all other questions affecting the welfare and the pocketbooks iv a pathriotic puple such as ours, who

place their pathriotism above their silf interests, but not so high above thim but what they can rach up wance in a while and take it down and look at it just to make shure that it is still there.

"If ye ask wan of our local statesmin what he thinks about the matter, he'll talk himself blue in the face trying to make ye belave that a Boord iv Control will be the salvation iv our fair but misguided city.

"I mit me frind Alderman Casey on the strate yisterday and sez I to him. 'Ye'll soon be out iv a job, old man. Too bad!'

" 'How's thot?' he asked.

" 'Why,' sez I, 'I understand that the city is about to adopt the Commission form iv Gover'mint, that the City Hall is to be entirely rinovated, hosed-out and scoured, and frade iv cock-rooches, rats and aldermin and the like. Thot there'll be no more piano-tuners directing the city's financial affairs and bond issues, thot our bridges will no more be built be grocery clerks and hack-drivers, thot our strates, walks, alleys and sewers will be planned and laid out be ingineers instead iv bootchers and chimney swaypes, and, in fact, thot our city's affairs will be controlled and handled be spicialists, instead iv be any rag-tag and bob-tail crew thot happens to get votes enough to land thim in the City Hall. Ah, sez I, 'Twill be a great day for Vancouver whin the Commission form iv Gover'mint goes into effect. How long will we have to wait, Casey?' sez I.

" 'Until about four days after Hades has froze over,' sez he with some show iv temper. 'Shannahan,' sez he, 'befur Vancouver gits a Commission form iv Gover'mint ye will have been dead so long that yeer discindints will consider yee too pra-historic to be anything but a mumber iv the monkey family, which I have me suspicions that ye are,' sez he. 'No, sir,' sez he. 'We'll have a Boord iv Control or we'll rip up ivery strate in town, if we can find any thot are not alriddy ripped up,' sez he. 'A city with its Boord iv Aldermin turned out is loike a great industrial instiotoon closed down, like a mighty river dried up, like the stopping iv the earth's rivilootions——'

" 'Or loike a jail delivery,' sez I, be the way iv being sociable.

" 'It will niver come. It will niver come!' sez he, very solemnly. 'We're too dapely intrinched to be routed and we'll foight to the last ditch,' sez he. 'What would the city do with all iv us jobless statesmin on its hands?' sez he. 'Haven't ye ordinary beings that do the voting fer us got any sinse or any gratitude? Would ye take the brid out iv our mouths? Would ye lave us stranded without any friendly craft to rescue us? Would ye——'

" 'Pardon the intirruption,' sez I, 'but me hearin's gitting poor. Did ye say craft or graft?'

" 'What would ye do?' sez he, not minding me quistion.

" 'Why don't ye go to work?' sez I. 'If ye have strong enough pulls we may be able to get ye jobs on the police force,' sez I.

" 'What!' he cried. 'After occupying the sates iv the mighty, do ye think that we would degrade ourselves be performing maniel labor? No! No!' sez he, 'deliver me from the thought. We must—we shall have a Boord iv Control.'

" 'But what is this Boord iv Control,' sez I. 'Am I roight in supposing that it is a body iv able-bodied plug-uglies crayated be the public to help it kape the Boord iv Aldermin under control whin they git into offis? Sure, if we kape ye at all, ye nade controllin'. In fact, whin ye git the strate mania on yeer minds, I wouldn't be surprised to see noomers iv ye become vilent. The Boord iv Control will have its hands full to control ye——'

" 'Control nothing!' sez he. 'Do ye think we'd stand for a gang iv hoboos like this dictating to the loikes iv us who are min iv ixperience in matters of states-minship and gover'mint and who lave no stone unturned or strate undemolished to dimonstrate at all times that we are still on the job? Do ye think we'll take off our hats to a lot iv ametoors loike thim fillows? No, sir! We are the byes that are running the show and we're going to continue to run it in the same good old way. If thim people have the nerve to lutt in, we'll give thim some iv the same medicine that we do to some iv these frish tax payers who have the affrontery to want to know what is being done with their money. With that fable mind of yeers, Shannahan,' he continued, 'ye can niver ixpict to figure out fer yerself these great quistions iv gover'mint and I'm glad ye have asked me advice on the soobject.'

" 'It sames to me,' sez I, 'that ye fellows are pritty anxious to hold on to yeer jobs. But I suppose its because iv yeer love fer the work and a pathriotic desire to sarve yeer fellowmin, and not as is generally supposed, because iv the princely salaries ye recave fer yeer services. The city is indade fortunate to have sich pooblic spirited citizens as ye are, who, sacrificing yeer very interest, step nobly to the front and volunteer and dedicate yeer sarvices at thirty-three dollars a month to the city. And it spakes volumes fer the high standard iv ability iv ye gentlemn who can accomplish so much on thrity-three dollars a month, who can make aich thirty-three grow to such vast proportions in sooch a short time. It proves that ye are financiers iv the highest order, that Hetty Green and John D. are village ametoors compared with ye. Only min iv great janeous could start in on thirty-three a month working fer the city and ind up owning the greater part iv it. Soomtimes I'm half inclined to think that ye overwork that thirty-three.'

" 'But coming back to the mane soobjct, sez I. 'Ye say that the Council will still monopolize all iv the authority and that the Boord iv Control will con-

trol nothing. What if the Boord differs with ye on these quistions?'

" 'We'll tolerate no opposition whativer,' sez he. 'The Boord iv Control must kape its place or there'll be civil war in the City Hall. Any nonsinse from thim fellows and we sind thim to bid without any sooper,' sez he.

" 'But iv what usefulness will this Boord iv Control be?' sez I. 'How will it improve the prisint condition iv affairs if wan may be so rude as to intimate that it can be improved?'

" 'Well, ye see,' sez he. 'The common pape, the rabble, taxpayers, and other illimits that go to make up the mob, seem to be fer some unknown rayson, demanding a change. Iv coorse, it amounts to nothing short iv anarchy, but in order to placate the plabians and thereby avide unplisant ixperiences, we must give thim a change. But we must look to it that the change doesn't hurt, ye know, that no damage is wrought thereby,' sez he. 'So long as the populace gets a change iv some sort, it will think its all right, and will fale satisfied. That's a way that populaces have with thim,' sez he. 'Thin the Boord iv Control will be very useful to us aldermin. It will help relave us of the cares of office. At prisint we lay iverything onto the City Engineer. Whin the pooblic howls be-foor our door, we open it and push out the City Engineer fer thim to scratch at. But the kick department is becoming so overworked that the Engineer is not able to handle the whole thing, so we'll lit the Boord iv Control divide the honors with him.'

" 'Thin,' sez I, 'if I should come to ye with a complaint that somewan residing across the way from me had dug up and carted away the strate in front of me house fer his own private use, ye would pass me on to the Boord iv Works, from there I would be handed on to the Boord iv Control, and from that port iv call I would be passed along to the City Engineer, and from thot way-station I would be hustled to the City Council again. Thin suddenly I'd realize that ye had me circulating, and thot the track was grased. But me case would be hopeless thin, me momintum would be sich that I couldn't stop; me brakes wouldn't hold, and ivery time I'd pass wan iv ye ye'd give me a lift. Sure, thot's a great schame,' sez I, 'a great boon to the complaining taxpayer. He'll certainly get a run fer his money.' (See Board of Control Chart).

" 'The Boord iv Control,' sez he, 'is the only cogwheel thot is missing in our civic machinery, and the missing part must be supplied. Ye see,' sez he, 'aven aldermin will become obsolete after years iv faithful sarvice, and it's mighty convenient to have a good soft berth handy to fall into when yeer usefulness is gone. 'Tis nice fat incomes that are attached to the Boord iv Control, we will look out fer thot,' sez he.

" 'But,' sez I, 'supposin' the payple prafer the Commission form iv Gover'mint to this Boord iv Control, Boord iv Aldermin, Boord iv Works, Boord iv

this and boord iv that, ad infinitum, schame of yeers, and supposin' that they cast a majority iv their votes in favor iv the Commission, what thin?'

" 'Shanrahan,' sez he, 'yeer childish simplicity is pitiful. Ye better go back to yeer nursing bottle and rattle box and net try to discuss quistions so vital to the pooblic wilfare, with min iv intilligence. Are ye that guileless that ye think the masses are wise enough to know the difference betwane a Commission and a Boord iv Control! Why,' sez he, 'we could call it a boord iv fiddlesticks and they'd vote fer it and think they were getting what they want. There ain't wan man in a hundred that knows what he's voting fer. It's so aisy that it's a shame to have to spind our time counting the votes. We should jist call it unanimous and lit it go at that.'

" 'No!' he continued, 'yeer wasting yeer time whin ye try to talk civic gover'mint. Shannahan; the quistion is too large fer ye.'

" 'Well,' sez I, 'I guess I wasn't cut out fer a politician or a safe-cracker. I think I'll go back to the sile,' sez I, 'and git away frim ye pathriotic schamers. I'm aither too foolish or too honest to be a useful mimber iv society.'

"A secluded lodge in the jungle iv some mid-Pacific isle, fer me. A place iv rist and refuge where I nade nivermore worry me hid about Boords iv Control, Boords iv Works, boords iv fiddlesticks, bottomless strates, thray plank side-walks, waste of pooblic funds, incompetence iv city officials, rapoodiation iv ag-graymints with citizens, or any iv the other blessings iv civilization which we enjoy in Vancouver. 'Good day, Mr. Casey,' sez I, 'and remimber wan thing: sometimes the pooblic gits enough, sometimes it wakes up and takes a swat at things. At sooch times ye can generally hear something drop. Don't play with this giant fire-cracker too ricklissly. It might go off in yeer hand.'"

—W. F. GITCHELL.

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## Kicks and Queries

*First Question—Is it not too radical a change? They are going to abolish the Mayor and Aldermen.*

*Answer—Not at all! It is simply supplanting a large committee by a small committee.*

*Second Question—It does away with the ward representation, and the weak ward will be neglected?*

*Answer—There are no wards. The city is the unit. The Council deals with the necessities of each section of the city on its merits.*



*Third Question—If you can corrupt a council of thirteen, why is it not easier to corrupt a council of five?*

Answer—The Commissioner is always in the limelight, and personally responsible to the ratepayers. A Board of Aldermen is wrapped in red tape in the form of numerous committees, and there is no individual responsibility. Corruption springs principally from the power to grant franchises. The Board of Aldermen have this power. The Commissioners do not have this power. It is vested in the people. (See Referendum.)

An alderman is only incidentally a city governor. He has nothing to lose, and may have much to gain. The Commissioner is essentially a city manager. He has no other business, and if he sacrifices his character he loses his business.

*Fourth Question—This is a new thing. Can we afford to experiment?*

Answer—Commission Government is now in force in eighty-nine cities and towns in the United States, and one hundred and forty-three are asking for it. In Canada, Guelph, St. Catharines, Lethbridge and Calgary have voted for it.

*Fifth Question—Are we not giving too much power to five men?*

Answer—On the contrary, we are giving the power to nobody. We are getting the liberty to use it ourselves, and we are paying five of the best men we can find to work for us.

*Kick No. 1—This Recall is no use. Seattle could not recall the Mayor when they wished to.*

Answer—Seattle is not blessed with Commission Government. They have a Recall in their Charter, but the number of names required on petitions is so ridiculously high that it renders the feature useless.

*Sixth Question—We are Britishers. Why do away with a British institution?*

Answer—Yes, we are Britishers; but we are also Canadians, and many systems which work in Britain do not work in Canada.

*Seventh Question—Would not Commission Government, with its high priced officials increase expenses?*

Answer—Next year the city will spend about \$6,000,000.00. Cut out the present haphazard system, and substitute Business. The economy thus effected will pay the salaries—and then some!

*Kick No. 2—What about that newspaper heading "Commission costs Tacoma heavily."*

Answer—The headlines were misleading, the reading matter told us that the total pay roll for the six summer months in 1910 were ten per cent. higher than for the same six months in 1909. The Commission evidently pushed the city work during the summer. It would improve matters if the same tactics were followed here.

*Eighth Question—Why not have three men instead of five?*

Answer—A Council of three men does not provide for necessary absentees, through sickness, city business out of town, or other unavoidable causes. Two men might be called away at one time, leaving the executive body seriously crippled.

*Ninth Question—Where are we going to get the men capable of holding these positions?*

Answer—There are plenty of men to be found when a fair living salary is offered for the position. The system of making a man stand on his own feet, and giving him authority to produce results, will bring out the best that is in him. Other cities and business houses find capable men. So can Vancouver.

### The following Cities have voted favorably upon the adoption of the Commission form of Municipal Government

#### ALABAMA

Montgomery  
Birmingham

#### CALIFORNIA

Berkeley  
Los Ang.  
Riverside  
San Diego

#### COLORADO

Colorado Spring  
Grand Junction

#### GEORGIA

Atlanta (under consideration)

#### IOWA

Des Moines  
Cedar Rapids  
Keokuk  
Burlington  
Sioux City  
Fort Dodge

#### IDAHO

Boise  
Lewiston

#### KANSAS

Kansas City  
Coffeyville  
Leavenworth  
Wichita  
Hutchinson  
Independence  
Anthony  
Cherryvale  
Topeka  
Parsons  
Pittsburg  
Emporia

#### LOUISIANA

Shreveport

#### MASSACHUSETTS

Taunton  
Haverhill  
Gloucester  
Chelsea  
Boston (modified)

#### MISSOURI

St. Joseph

#### MINNESOTA

Mankato

NORTH DAKOTA

Grand Forks  
Fargo  
Minot  
Mandan  
Bismark

NEW YORK

Buffalo  
Mount Vernon

NORTH CAROLINA

Charlotte

OKLAHOMA

Guthrie  
Ardmore  
Muskogee  
L Reno  
Tulsa  
Sapulpa  
Claremore  
Enid  
McAlister

SOUTH CAROLINA

Columbia

SOUTH DAKOTA

Yankton  
Sioux Falls  
Huron  
Pierre  
Dell Rapids  
Vermillion  
Rapid City

TEXAS

Galveston  
Houston  
Palestine  
Waco  
Fort Worth  
Austin  
El Paso  
Dallas  
Denison  
San Antonio  
Greenville  
Sherman  
Beaumont

TENNESSEE

Etawah  
Memphis  
Bristol  
Clarksville  
Richard City

WASHINGTON

Tacoma  
Spokane

WISCONSIN

Eau Claire

THE funds to cover the  
Expense of Issuing this  
Pamphlet have been sub-  
scribed by the following  
Public Spirited Business  
:: :: :: Men :: :: ::

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L. D. TAYLOR, Mayor	ALEX. MORRISON, Candidate for Mayor
S. J. CASTLEMAN	
E. P. MILLER	W. R. ARNOLD
G. F. ROSTEEN	W. H. HARGRAVE
M. S. LOGAN	K. D. McTAVISH
J. W. WEART	CHAS. R. GILBERT
D. GLANT	CECIL KILLAM
E. MAHON	JAS. BEVERIDGE
E. CLOUGH	W. S. CAMERON

