

Putting a City Government on a Business Basis

Readers of *The Commoner* may be interested in the work now being undertaken by Mayor Charles W. Bryan of Lincoln, Nebraska, in advancing a program of practical business efficiency in city government, and securing for its citizens the largest measure of comfort, happiness and financial benefits. His program, which was printed in a recent issue of *The Commoner*, outlined in part his ideas of the things he believed necessary for the welfare and future progress of Lincoln.

Lincoln is no different from scores of other American cities in its general needs, but, like many of these cities, it has suffered from a lack of public spirited leadership and a general apathy of its citizens in the conduct of its city government. Lincoln, though free from the taint of municipal corruption in the past, was drifting into a condition that would make it an easy prey to interests that never hold the people's interests at heart. Though nominally operating under a commission form of government, city government in Lincoln was still tied by traditions of precedent established when the city was a village and not adapted to the thoroughgoing city of modern times. Instead of being the greatest help to its citizenship, many of the practices in vogue in the city government were becoming a hindrance to the moral and material advancement of the city.

Last spring it became necessary to elect a new commission. No one had a definite program for the future welfare and advancement of the city, and little or no encouragement was given to the ideas advanced by the civic reform organizations. The municipal machine had lost its spark-plug.

Under these conditions, Mr. Bryan announced a definite program for municipal advancement, and failing to secure the enlistment of a proper leader to carry out his plan, took up the task himself and entered the primaries. He was endorsed by the people, and stood second on the list of candidates in the number of votes received. At the regular city election, he was elected to the city commission by a majority of 1,418 over his opponent and was later chosen mayor of Lincoln. Immediately following his election he started the work of securing the reforms outlined in his platform. Some of these, notably the free city employment bureau and the free city legal aid bureau, have already been secured and the city is enjoying the benefit of them.

Continuing his work, Mr. Bryan recently submitted a list of recommendations to the city commission. He has invited the co-operation of the citizenship in his plan and has asked citizens interested in the matter to write him at the city hall, giving their views on city matters. A digest of the recommendations submitted by Mr. Bryan follows:

The Mayor's Recommendations

1. The mayor recommends that the care of the city hall be placed under the supervision of the department of accounts and finances.
2. The department of sidewalks is a part of the streets department and should be handled in connection with that department, and the recommendation is made that the sidewalk department be immediately placed under the department of streets and public improvements.
3. The recommendation is made

that the department of parks shall be placed under the care of the mayor under the department of public affairs.

The recent movement for park extension from J street to O street and the educational work done to carry a bond issue for that purpose was initiated and carried on by the public not in official capacity. Not that the commissioner having in charge the matter of work of providing park facilities for the people of Lincoln was not interested in parks, but because it was physically impossible for him to lead a movement for park extension by the acquiring of lands and the development of a series of parks such as the Lincoln people have asked for and that the city has been handicapped owing to the lack of. The educational work, coupled with the acquiring of properties and the development thereof for park purposes, the establishment of boulevards, etc., is a large department in itself. The importance of it to a city can not be overestimated, and this department in a number of other cities of the size of Lincoln is handled by one commissioner without any other duties. In the acquiring of land for park purposes and the development thereof the superintendent of parks is required to deal with all other departments of the city, and in the developing of the park system of Lincoln it is necessary for him to work in conjunction with the sanitary board, and by virtue of his office the mayor having a general supervision of all departments, being the member of the commission that deals with the public and speaks for the public on all matters of public affairs, is by virtue of his office in a better position to do work with the public in carrying out the park extension and development in the opinion of the mayor to a better advantage than would be possible for any other commissioner to do who is charged with the growing needs of two large departments owned by the city and handling the business that is larger in scope and responsibility than all other departments of the city combined. The preliminary work which has already been done in carrying out the demands of the public in extending the park system from J street to O street has demonstrated in many ways the importance of the park work being immediately placed under the department of public affairs.

Extend Lighting Business

4. The recommendation is made that at least \$5,000 be appropriated for an extension of the wiring and municipal lighting department so that the public desiring to patronize the municipal lighting plant may have the privilege of doing so.

5. Recommendation is made that all moneys collected for taxation or from public utility service by the city shall be paid directly to the city treasurer. The charter only contemplates one city treasurer, and requires him to give a bond sufficient to protect all the moneys that come into the possession of the city. By the payment direct to the city treasurer all money received for municipal lighting and water, the public moneys will be more safely guarded, the duplication of high-priced department heads will be avoided, which will amount to considerable saving to the public, and employees who will be engaged in the collection and accounting for money can be reduced, and the dealing with the public by those who were charged with the responsibility of collecting all moneys will be done under the

personal direction of and in the presence of the commissioner of finances, who is always in the department, and thereby in the opinion of the mayor give more satisfactory service to the public than it is possible to do under the direct charge of subordinates and almost wholly in the absence of the commissioner whose work in connection with the extension and maintenance of the large departments of water and light prevent him from superintending the dealing with the public in the matter of settling all water and light bills and the adjustment of misunderstandings.

In the opinion of the mayor it was undoubtedly intended by the charter and it is in the interest of safety, economy and efficiency that the collections of water and light funds be immediately placed under the department of public accounts and finances.

Only One Pole Line

6. The recommendation is made that all public utilities companies, including the city's municipal plants, be required to use the same poles on the streets and alleys and that an ordinance should be passed at once regulating the joint use of same.

7. Recommendation is made that a landscape architect be employed for one year at a salary not to exceed two thousand dollars per annum under the supervision of the mayor for the purpose of advising as to the consolidation and removal of poles from the park spaces and to draw plans for the parking of each piece of park land now owned and also for new land as it is acquired for park purposes so that our park system will be mapped out and developed along expert lines rather than by untrained men. The immediate carrying out of this suggestion will greatly enhance the value of property in Lincoln by beautifying and placing Lincoln in a better position to compete with other cities in growth and development, and from an economic standpoint it will be a money maker to the people, as a great deal of the present development will have to be done over again later on in order to meet the tastes and condition that Lincoln people are interested in.

A Real City Auditor

8. A recommendation is made that a city auditor should be appointed whose work will be under the supervision of the mayor. The present auditor is also city clerk, and the said clerk is appointed by the city treasurer and his work is supervised by the city treasurer, and I understand that the records kept by the auditor are taken from the figures supplied him by the city treasurer. The city clerk's department should either be put under the department of public affairs so that the said clerk will act in the capacity of auditor or a separate auditor should be employed by the city to carry out the duties of an auditor as so intended and directed by the charter.

9. Recommendation is made that the city should pay for the surety bonds of the city treasurer in place of the banks doing it and that banks should be required to pay the rate of interest to the city of Lincoln that they pay for the city funds of other cities and for state funds under similar conditions.

10. Recommendation is made that the superintendent of accounts and finances publish a list of all unpaid taxes and other individual, partnership or corporate indebtedness to the city at least once every twelve months for the consideration of the public.

11. A recommendation is made that one police woman be employed and her salary be provided for in the appropriation and that she should remain on duty during the hours of 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. to advise with and protect young girls and to keep a

general supervision over all places of public amusement frequented by children, girls and women.

12. Recommendation is made that a trained visiting nurse shall be employed by the city and an appropriation be made for same, and that her entire time shall be devoted to the city's interest under the direction of the superintendent of health.

Sell Park Bonds Now

13. A recommendation is made that the fifty thousand dollar park bonds recently voted for park extension be immediately sold so that the money shall become available for the acquiring of the property desired for city park extension.

14. Recommendation is made that \$3,500 be appropriated for the establishing and maintenance for one year of a public city market located between the retail business and the residence district of the city which will be accessible to the housewives, and thus enable the public to secure fresher vegetables and a reduction in cost.

The public have directed that a garbage disposal plant be constructed and have voted fifty thousand dollar bonds for that purpose. A recommendation is made that the plans for the garbage plant be developed as soon as possible and that an appropriation of \$2,000 for the coming fiscal year be appropriated for its maintenance.

16. A recommendation is made that all garbage wagons should be owned by the city and that they should have tight covers and that a systematic collection of garbage should be done by the city to protect the public health.

17. Recommendation is made that an appropriation for an additional automobile for the police department should be provided so that the public may receive quick service in emergency cases where more than one emergency case requires attention at one time.

18. A recommendation is made that additional fire equipment should be supplied and an appropriation be made for same so that the property of the city will have better protection and that the chief of the fire department be requested through the commissioner of public safety to submit to the council at the earliest possible moment a list of the present equipment and the chief's recommendation for additional equipment and his reasons therefor so that the council can consider this matter in making up its budget.

19. Recommendation is made that the salaries of all employees at the city hall doing similar work should be standardized so that all will receive the same pay that are doing similar work, and that the matter of salaries for heads and sub-heads under the various commissioners be considered as to amounts to be paid in relation to the character of the work done and the necessary study and preparation to fit such employees for their respective duties.

20. A recommendation is made that funds should be provided by an appropriation so that an inspector of weights and measures can be employed whose entire time shall be devoted to the work of inspection to prevent the public from being imposed upon through negligence or intent as the public has been imposed upon in the recent past.

Provide Winter Work

21. A recommendation is made that extension and development work of all departments of the city that can be postponed until after September 15 shall be commenced after that date and continued into the winter as far as possible. The carrying out of this recommendation will employ Lincoln men and Lincoln citizens who

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