

Galveston Form of Government

Commission Plan Gives Very General Satisfaction.

The problem of municipal government is perhaps the most important single question before the American people today.

It affects us in every phase of our daily life.

Through the health, water, fire, police, sewer and other departments, every city government directly affects the health, life and property of every man, woman and child residing within its limits.

Practical experience, extending over a period of six and a half years, has conclusively proved that the Galveston plan of city government is a complete success.

There is nothing at all remarkable about the Galveston plan, nor about the men that are directly its municipal government. The city commission is simply a board of directors, elected at large by the qualified voters of the entire city every two years. This board is composed of five practical business men, each fully recognizing that economy and business methods, not politics, should be employed in transacting the business affairs of the city.

The business that is being directed by these five men, as agents for the citizens of Galveston, can be briefly summarized as follows: Furnishing people with pure wholesome water, adequate sewerage, efficient police and fire protection, well lighted, clean and well paved streets, drainage, sanitation, public hospital for the sick and a careful management of the city finances.

FOUR CITY DEPARTMENTS.

The business of the city is divided into four departments, each department being under the charge and direction of a commissioner. These four commissioners and the mayor, collectively, constitute what is termed the "Board of Commissioners of the city of Galveston." The mayor is the president of the board, and the executive head of the city government. He has all of the rights, powers and duties conferred upon the office of mayor by the constitution and laws of this state, has the right to vote upon all questions, but has no veto power. Majority rule always prevails.

The commissioners at the first meeting after election, or as soon thereafter as possible, by a majority vote, designate from among their members one commissioner who shall be known as "Commissioner of Finance and Revenue," and under whose direction is placed the officers of the assessor and collector, the city treasurer and city auditor. He is also charged with the duty of examining into and keeping informed as to the finances of the city, and with the advice and assistance of the other members of the board, he prepares the annual budget of the city. Great care is exercised in preparing the city budget and it is never exceeded in expenditures.

MEETINGS OF BOARD.

The city charter requires that the board shall meet in regular session at least once every week. These meetings take place every Thursday afternoon

at six o'clock. These meetings are conducted in a dignified, businesslike manner, and are free from wrangling, disputes and confusion. The commissioners sit around a directors' table, the mayor presiding. The city attorney and the heads of the various departments are required by the city charter to attend all meetings of the board. But little speech-making is indulged in, and the presence of idle spectators is an exception rather than the rule. Business is transacted promptly, but without undue haste. All important matters are discussed and differences adjusted in conference. The city attorney has great influence with the commissioners, and his advice is freely sought.

"Too many cooks spoil the broth" is an old saying, which can well be applied to a board of twelve or sixteen aldermen. In Galveston it has been clearly proved that four commissioners and a mayor, or a president, can transact the business of sixteen aldermen and a mayor, and do it better, more expeditiously and with greater harmony.

SIMPLICITY OF FEATURE.

The strongest feature of the commission plan of city government is its perfect simplicity, its directness, and in limiting the number of those directly charged with the management of the city's affairs and in fixing or in the centralization of responsibility.

Under this plan the mismanagement of a department is promptly laid at the door of the neglectful commissioner, not only by the general public but by the mayor-president and the other members of the board. The knowledge of personal responsibility and watchfulness causes each commissioner to take a personal interest and to feel a special pride in the proper management of his department, realizing as he must that the merit as well as the defects are easily recognized by his associates, as well as by the public generally.

Pollard Defines Position

When Congressman Pollard was shown the Washington dispatches published in the State Journal under date of March 1st, commenting upon his voting for the adoption of the rule of the House creating a calendar Wednesday, he made the following comment: "It seems strange, but it so often occurs, that the advocates of reform are so likely to fall into the habit of calling every man a traitor or dishonest who does not agree with all their views. I have attended every meeting, save one, of the so-called insurgents in both the 1st and 2nd sessions of the 60th congress and have taken an active part in the discussions of contemplated changes in the rules of the House. There was at the beginning a wide difference of opinion among the insurgents as to just what changes should be made in the rules. There were almost as many opinions as there were members attending these meetings. At one time I feared our differences were so great that we could not get together and that the movement would fail. We finally agreed, however, that we would submit the various plans to a vote, agreeing in advance that the majority of those participating in the conference should determine just what changes we would stand for. The result was

we decided to fight for two rules only: First, the removal from the speaker of his power to appoint the standing committees of the House; Second, that one day each week should be set aside when all bills of the House and Union calendars would automatically come before the House for consideration. I have no hesitancy in stating that from the beginning of these meetings I was in doubt as to the good results that would follow taking from the speaker the power to appoint the standing committees. I gave expression to this view both in and out of the conferences. There could have been no uncertainty in the mind of anyone as to where I stood upon this question. I feared that the appointment of standing committees would result in log-rolling between individual members on the one hand and the larger states on the other and that smaller states like Nebraska would receive little or no recognition. Knowing that in the Senate the standing committees are all appointed by a committee and that there is just as much dissatisfaction as to their operation of the House rules, I was naturally doubtful whether the appointment of the standing committees in the House by a committee would work any better than it has in the Senate. I am free to admit, however, that the plan presented by the House insurgents would be an improvement over the Senate rules. However, I gave up my opposition to this plan when I found that a majority was against me. I participated in the discussions in good faith and helped to perfect the rules. When the bill was submitted to the House I signed it along with the other 28 insurgents and would have voted for it had it come before the House.

The other rule the insurgents agreed upon, providing for a calendar Tuesday, met with hearty approval. The rule submitted to the House for which I voted and for which I am criticised, provided for a calendar Wednesday and embodied the same principles that were agreed by the House insurgents. In my opinion, its adoption if carried out in good faith, and I have no reason to think otherwise, will accomplish much in the way of reform although it does not go as far as I should like. My experience in the House has convinced me that the criticisms of the inaction of Congress in matters of legislation demanded by the people has not been due to the manner in which the committees are appointed but to the inability of members to get bills reported

from the committees and to get them before the House for consideration even after they reach the calendar. Until this change was made in the rules the only way bills could be brought up for consideration, except privileged bills, was by unanimous consent or by a suspension of the rules which required a two-thirds vote. Under the power of recognition lodged in the Speaker he could under either procedure prevent any bill from coming before the House even though the 300 members favored it by simply refusing to recognize a member to call up the bill. Under the new rule adopted providing for a calendar Wednesday all bills on the House and union calendars will be automatically thrown into the House where they must be voted upon with or without the Speaker's consent. Under the operation of this rule the Speaker will be powerless to prevent the consideration of bills that have been reported by the committees of the House. When this rule was brought in providing for substantially the same thing that myself and the rest of the insurgents had agreed to, I did not think I could honorably vote against it simply because it was reported by the committee on rules and not by one of the insurgents. The fact that it did not appeal to me as an argument why the one should not be adopted. I have done nothing more nor less than to vote for one of the reforms demanded by the insurgents. The adoption of this rule will in my opinion interfere in no way with the adoption of the other rule later.

I was elected to Congress as a republican and did not propose to bolt my party and vote with the democrats to prevent the adoption of a rule I had solemnly pledged myself to support which would liberate the House and permit it to discharge the public business in an orderly way.

The Washington correspondent of the Journal charges me with being insincere and attempting to deceive the public. My action in this matter alone refutes the charge. It seems to me that if I have made a reputation for any one thing since I entered public life it is for having the courage of my convictions. I am going out of congress. The so-called Cannon machine is powerless to help me in any way. I can secure no possible benefit from my action. Had I desired simply to do the popular thing I would have voted with the rest of the Nebraska delegation. Had I done so I would have received no criticism and would not have been called upon to explain. When I found

my colleagues were voting "No" (and they had all voted when my name was called) it would have been much easier for me to have joined them. I knew I would be criticised but I could not stultify my conscience and vote against a bill I knew to be right simply because it would be popular to do so.

Extra Session Is Called

President William Howard Taft has called the congress of the United States into special session for the purpose, among other things, of revising the tariff. Following is a text of the call: "By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation: "Whereas, Public interests require that the congress of the United States should be convened in extra session at 12 o'clock, noon, on the 15th day of March, 1909, to receive such communi-

cation as may be made by the executive; now.

"Therefore, I, William Howard Taft, president of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim and declare that an extraordinary occasion requires the congress of the United States to convene in extra session at the capitol in the city of Washington, on the fifteenth day of March, 1909, at 12 o'clock, noon, at which all persons who shall, at that time, be entitled to act as members thereof are hereby required to take notice.

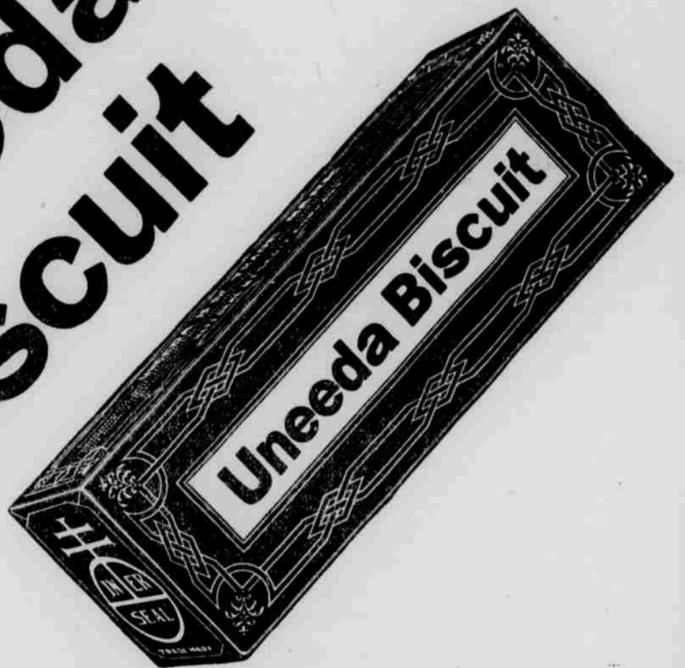
"Given under my hand and the seal of the United States of America, the sixth day of March, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, nine hundred and nine, and of the independence of the United States, the one hundredth and thirty-third.

"WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT."
"By the president, P. C. Knox, Secretary of State."

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Furniture That Pleases

Old Winter with his reign of ice and snow will soon be gone. Those chilly blasts will be a thing of the past. Spring with its new demands will soon be here, and you will need some new furniture. Our line is replete with up-to-date, designs and patterns, which are sure to please, and at prices, which are sure to appeal to the prudent buyer. See our display, we are glad to show the goods and quote you prices.

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Pianos for Particular People

When you meet a person who is very particular in musical matters it is safe to conclude that that person owns one of our pianos. The undoubted preeminence of our Pianos accounts for their adoption by the best judges of music everywhere. The action of our Pianos is up to the standard. Strike a note on one of our pianos a number of times and you will get a response for every note you strike. Nine out of ten pianos will simply result in a succession of blurred tones. We do expert tuning and repairing.

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