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The jailing of a few more dishonest bankers might have a tendency to lessen the demand, and the need, for guarantee of deposits.

The retirement of Platt and the election of Root may raise the personnel of the senate, but it hardly lessens the influence of the trusts and combinations.

The Smithsonian Institute is sure of adding largely to its collection of animal tales, even if it does not add to its collection of skins.

After that round of 'possum dinners it need not be surprising if the next president shows a disposition to play 'possum on tariff revision.

The man who franked a private letter is roundly denounced by the same gentleman who rewarded an acknowledged violator of the rebate law with a cabinet position.

The watch trust can give Mr. William Nelson Cromwell some valuable pointers concerning Representative Rainey, which same pointers the said Mr. Cromwell would do well to heed.

Mr. Cromwell is quite sure that it doesn't take much to make some kinds of republics, but the kind of a republic we have has cost a lot of money and thousands of precious lives.

President Roosevelt rides over ninety miles in a day, and Speaker Cannon rides over something like four hundred congressmen in the same length of time. But the speaker is a rather smooth rider.

It should not be forgotten that Gompers, Morrison and Mitchell are to be sent to jail, not for violation of any law, but for ignoring the order of a judge. These three men have never been convicted of violating any law.

It is an encouraging sign that Senator Stephenson—or any other senator—is being hauled over the coals on suspicion of having used money unlawfully to secure re-election. A few years ago that sort of thing was considered quite proper.

If state university professors are entitled to a retired pension fund the state should pay it. And if university professors, why not public school teachers? And if professors and public school teachers, why not all other men and women who have served their day and generation by useful labor?

# EDUCATIONAL SERIES

## Commission Form of City Government

Mr. Sidney J. Dillon of Des Moines, Iowa, describes the commission plan of government sometimes known as "the Des Moines plan," in this way:

After giving due weight and attention to the various problems entering into the question of local self-government it will be found that there are only three factors, each exerting a wide influence, which constitute the basis for the success or failure of every city government. These elements are, first, the character and ability of the officials holding public office; second, the system by which these officials are elected and the affairs of the city administered; third, the intelligence of the electorate and interest manifested on the part of the citizens in all questions pertaining to the management of their local government.

It is difficult to determine the relative importance of these elements, for while capable officials may accomplish a great deal for the city, though handicapped by an unwieldy system, it also remains true that unless the intelligent citizen will participate in public affairs you can not induce representative men to accept a municipal office; and furthermore, without some modification in our present municipal election laws, you can not nominate and elect these representative men, even though they consent to serve the municipality, therefore the modern city charter must take into consideration the three factors which have been mentioned.

In June, 1907, the citizens of Des Moines, Ia., adopted a charter which has since become famous as the Des Moines plan of city government and this charter now represents, perhaps, the most important experiment in municipal administration ever made in America. The change in our form of city government was not due to a crisis or a sporadic reform wave but, in fact, resulted from a conviction on the part of the business men that the growth and continued development of the city was greatly retarded by a lax and inefficient city administration.

In drafting the Des Moines plan charter the framers of the law had four particular objects in view: First, they wished to create a municipal office having such attractive features that it would prove an inducement to representative men to seek political recognition. They also wished to eliminate those objectionable features in politics which have heretofore been the means of squelching the political ambitions of desirable men and to minimize, as far as possible, the opportunities for the political parasite who seeks office not for the purpose of benefiting the people but for the purpose of personal aggrandizement. The second object in view was to vest complete governmental authority in a small deliberate body, consisting of a mayor and four councilmen. The third object was to simplify the present complex municipal system so we might dispense with the municipal boards, committees and departments with their overlapping and conflicting duties. We also wished to substitute for the confusion resulting from a divided authority a fixed and definite responsibility upon each official for every act of the administration. The fourth object in view was to establish a more democratic form of city government and to provide the means whereby the power of the people might be greatly extended and their control over municipal affairs rendered more effective.

These four objects represent, in substance, the purpose which we hope to accomplish with our new Des Moines plan of city government. The method of accomplishment and the means by which these purposes may be carried out involves a discussion of the details of the charter.

The first provision, designed to facilitate the election of desirable men, was the obliteration of ward lines. It is generally recognized today that an official should not be chosen because of particular geographical location but rather because of his peculiar fitness for the work he has to do. The system of ward representation has afforded security for the corrupt influence often exerted by the large public service corporations; it has produced the distinctive American type known as the ward heeler, or local political boss who, with a small coterie of active men, not only dictates who the nominee for councilman from their ward shall be, but very often elect, year after year, men who are known to the community to be incompetent and dis-

honest. By obliterating the ward line a candidate for office is voted upon by the whole city and as a consequence his efforts while in office are likely to be directed toward benefiting the whole city rather than a particular district. It is the general experience that the ward alderman labors in the interest of his own ward, chiefly for the purpose of perpetuating himself in office, and his vote on all matters which pertain to the city at large is apt to be influenced more or less by selfish consideration.

Having dispensed with the territorial limitations upon candidates, we next provide for a non-partisan primary and election. This provision of the law eliminates all reference to party designation on the ballot and thereby counteracts the detrimental influence which has so often been indirectly exerted over the citizenship because of their party affiliations. Heretofore the machinery of the party has usually been in the hands of a small number of individuals who held a caucus and dictated the nominee. The voter had very little choice in the election of the candidate, and on election day has been usually restricted to the candidates of the respective parties. It can not be denied that the bringing of national issues into municipal elections has constantly been a source of evil, and there is no justification for the practice. It is not apparent how the question of a candidate's opinion in reference to tariff provisions or the Philippine policy has any natural connection with his attitude and judgment as a municipal officer. Therefore, in order to dispense with party politics and national issues we have designed this primary law, which operates in the following way:

In order for a citizen to become a candidate for either mayor or councilman he must file a petition with the city clerk announcing his candidacy. This petition must bear the signature of twenty-five electors of the city, who make affidavits that the candidate is of age and of good moral character. Ten days before the primaries are held the city clerk takes the petitions which have been filed and prepares a primary ballot; the names of the candidates being arranged in alphabetical order under the title of the position to which they aspire. If a citizen is a candidate for mayor his name is placed under the heading of mayor; if a candidate for councilman, under the heading of councilman. There is nothing said on the ballot in reference to the candidate's political faith and because of the alphabetical arrangement of names there can be no favored position. Having held the primary, the two candidates for the office of mayor who have received the highest number of votes are selected to be voted upon at the regular election. In order to secure the councilmen the eight candidates in the primary who receive the highest number of votes are selected to be voted upon at the regular election.

This system of non-partisan primary and election affords us two opportunities of leaving out undesirable men. First at the primary, when the citizen may exercise a choice among all candidates, and then at the election, when the voter will still have a choice of one of two men for mayor and the right to select four councilmen from eight candidates whose names appear on the ballot.

A further provision which was incorporated into this charter as a means of making the office attractive to capable men is that provision of the law which has reference to compensation. It is an indisputable fact that our public officials holding responsible positions are woefully underpaid, therefore an attempt has been made to provide an adequate salary. The mayor is to receive \$3,500 per year and the councilmen a salary of \$3,000. The salary should be even higher than this, but in a provision of this character it is necessary to consider public sentiment for it would no doubt be a difficult matter to educate the average voter up to the point where he would believe the office justified a large salary as well as honorary distinction. These three propositions of the law, the obliteration of ward lines, the non-partisan primary and the provision for an adequate compensation constitute the special features of this law, which have been embodied in the charter for the purpose of aiding in the nomination and election of capable men. Too much weight can not be attached to these particular phases of