

Commission Government for All Third-Class Cities of Pennsylvania

A. M. Fuller, Meadville, Pa., in "The American City": On the first of December next the commission form of government will be inaugurated in every third-class city of Pennsylvania. The new act providing this important change received Governor Tener's signature on June 27.

The limited-council form of city government was first considered in Pennsylvania in 1908. At that time there were but twelve cities in the United States operating under the new form of government. In 1909 the subject was considered favorably by the chamber of commerce of Pittsburgh, and in 1910 the third-class cities of the state, in a convention held at Williamsport, formed a permanent organization called the allied civic bodies committee. In Pennsylvania the cities are divided into three classes: Philadelphia, first class; Pittsburgh and Scranton, second class; and twenty-three cities of less than 100,000 population constitute the third class.

In 1911 bills were presented to the legislature providing for the commission form of government for the cities of the second and third classes. The legislature declined to pass these measures, but, owing to the great pressure brought to bear upon it by the cities of the second class, the most essential feature of the new form of government—the limited council—was granted the cities of the second class, Pittsburgh and Scranton.

The cities of the third class, largely through their civic organizations acting under the direction of the allied civic bodies committee, have continued the effort to secure the limited-council form of government and presented to the legislature of 1913 a bill known as Clark bill 13, which provides not only a limited council but many other features of value which are usually included in what is known as commission government. This measure passed the senate and house with only four dissenting votes, and, as above mentioned, has since been approved by the governor.

The constitution of Pennsylvania prohibits special legislation; hence it was not possible to render the act optional, but necessary to make it compulsory in all of the cities of the third class. Fortunately the sentiment in favor of the adoption of the new form of government is, with few exceptions, most favorable.

Provisions of the Act

In brief, the act provides for the election at large, on a non-partisan ballot, of a mayor for a term of four years and four councilmen for a term of two years. Each member of the council, including the mayor, is given the right to vote on all questions coming before the council, but the mayor has no right to veto such acts as shall have been passed by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the council. The controller is to be elected by the people for a term of four years, while the city solicitor, city engineer, city treasurer, city assessor and city clerk are appointed by the council to serve for a term of two years. The city assessor will act under the direction of the council, and the council will serve as the board of revision.

The act provides that the salary of the mayor of each city of the third class shall not be less than \$500 nor more than \$3,500 per year and shall be fixed by ordinance. For the first term of any mayor elected under the provisions of the act, and until thereafter changed by ordinance, the salary shall be, in cities having a population of 15,000 or under, \$500;

from 15,000 to 30,000 inhabitants, \$1,200; from 30,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, \$2,500; from 50,000 to 70,000 inhabitants, \$3,000; over 70,000 inhabitants, \$3,500 per annum. The first council elected under the provisions of the act shall by ordinance fix the salary to be paid to the mayor in said cities for succeeding terms, and the amount of compensation for the mayor shall not be increased or diminished during the term of office for which he shall be elected. Succeeding councils may change the amount of such compensation.

The act provides that the salaries of councilmen shall not be less than \$250 nor more than \$3,000 per year; that for the first term of councilmen elected under the provision of the act the salary of each councilman shall be as follows: In cities of 15,000 or under, \$300; between 15,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, \$750; 30,000 to 50,000, \$2,000; 50,000 to 70,000, \$2,500; over 70,000, \$3,000 per annum.

This rather peculiar provision for salaries is made necessary in order to render the act constitutional. It has this advantage, however, that the flexibility of the plan will enable the cities of the third class to adopt the city-manager or business-manager plan of city government, if they so desire, and add but little to the cost of administration. The initiative and referendum are included on the basis of 20 per cent of the vote at the preceding election for mayor. The recall and civil service features of the usual form of commission government have been omitted.

The new act is of special interest to the forty-two boroughs of the state having a population of over 10,000. Owing to the present unwieldy form of third-class city government, these boroughs have declined to become cities. Under the new form of government many of the boroughs will become cities of the third class. The new law is, therefore, of interest to more than sixty cities of Pennsylvania.

By the terms of another act, approved July 8, prompt adoption of the new form of government is made possible for the forty-two boroughs of the state having a population of over 10,000. By resolution of the council or corporate authorities of any such borough, or by petition of one hundred qualified electors, an election shall be called within fifteen days on the question of whether the third-class city form of government shall be adopted. The provisions of this act also apply to any two or more contiguous boroughs situated within the same county and having together a population of at least 10,000.

THE PRESIDENT'S WORD TO MEXICO FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The American people have reason to be proud of President Wilson's address to congress on the Mexican situation. It is more than an address or message from the president to congress. It is an address from the American people to the people of Mexico and to the world.

It is couched in lofty language and infused with a lofty spirit. It sets our relationship to Mexico, our desires for Mexico and our duty to Mexico upon a high plane of disinterested friendship. It makes it clear as crystal that we are actuated by no motive of selfish gain, but by pure considerations of international responsibility.

We want, President Wilson forcefully points out, the return of peace and order and the establishment of

true constitutional government for the sake of the Mexican people themselves, of American citizens in Mexico, of American citizens in Mexico, of Mexico's Central American neighbors and of the world, whose interest in the southern quarter of the North American continent is rendered keen just now by the approaching completion of the Panama canal.

President Wilson has voiced nobly the sentiment and the purpose of the American people. And let no one be deceived—neither Mexican officials, nor foreign observers, nor yellow newspapers within our own borders. President Wilson's voice in this critical situation is the voice of the American people. The people of the United States do not lust after Mexico. They have no desire to profit out of Mexico's misfortune. They wish to help and not to harry; to extend the hand of neighborliness and not to shake the mailed fist of covetousness.

Those in control of affairs in Mexico would do well to take President Wilson's words as a true statement of the sentiment and the desire of the American people. They would do well to heed his counsel.

What is it that he advises? Merely that the Mexican people exchange the bayonet for the ballot, that they forsake the armed camp for the polling place, and that General Huerta agree that he will observe, as though it were the letter, the spirit of the Mexican constitution when it declares

that no man in General Huerta's position at the head of an ad interim administration shall be a candidate for president at the ensuing election.

All that the United States asks is that the Mexican people be given a free opportunity to select the administration under which they will go forward; and that all parties agree to accept the people's decision.

If the contending groups in Mexico will adopt that course and carry it out in good faith, the United States stands ready to render every assistance in its power, through recognition, the encouragement of financial assistance, and every good office.

The president has spoken for the American people and spoken well. He has also spoken to the American people and counseled patience. We, as well as Mexico, would do well to heed his advice.—New York Independent.

THEN AND NOW

Her mother was a bashful thing,
Oh, how I loved her when she'd sing
"On the other side of Jordan,
In the sweet fields of Eden,
There is rest for the weary,
And there's rest for you."

But now she has a daughter who
Will sing this grand old hymn for you:

"Oh, you kid, it's a bear,
Cuddle up, kiss me quick,
Hold me tight, you're a bear,
That's the tangoed Smearkase rag."
—Cincinnati Enquirer.

The Midwest Life

The year 1912 will always stand out prominently in the history of this company, because:

1. It ceased writing participating policies and now writes only stock or low premium policies. It does not charge more than every insurance man knows is necessary, and attempt to justify the act by promising to return the overcharge in the guise of a dividend. A dividend on a life insurance policy is in no sense a profit. It is only the return of that part of the premium which is in excess of the amount necessary to enable the company to pay all expenses and losses and to set aside the required reserve. To get dividends a policyholder must literally buy them. The excess paid over the rate charged by other old line companies which do not issue such policies is the price.

2. It placed on the market as complete a line of policies with as fair and liberal provisions and at as low a premium rate as any company in the United States offers. Included in the list are such policies as Ordinary Life, 10, 15 and 20-Payment Life policies; 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30-Year Endowment policies; policies carrying total and permanent disability benefits; and policies which provide, in case of accidental death within ninety days after receiving the injury, that the company will pay double the face of the policy.

3. It changed the methods of valuing its policies from the full preliminary term basis to a modified preliminary term basis, thereby providing for the full net level premium reserve at the end of the fifteenth year. This is a rather technical point. We will not attempt to enlarge upon it except to say that this change removed the only ground of criticism that had ever been lodged against this company by BEST'S INSURANCE REPORTS (Life), a recognized authority in the insurance world.

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