

NEWS AND NOTES

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

WILLIAM BENNETT MUNRO

The annual conventions of the National Municipal League and the American Civic Association were held in Providence, R. I., during the week beginning November 18, last. Hitherto these two organizations have pursued the policy of holding separate annual meetings at different seasons of the year and in different sections of the country; but this year the experiment of joint meetings was tried for the first time. In every way the experiment was an unqualified success: the programme was more elaborate and more varied than ever before; and the attendance at the meetings exceeded the hopes of the most sanguine. Unusual interest in the proceedings was manifested by the citizens of Providence, and an encouraging number of the leaders of local public opinion listened to all of the more important papers.

Those to whom the choice of a place of meeting was committed were very fortunate in their selection of Providence, for not only were the facilities of Brown University placed at the disposal of the two organizations for all the meetings, but the local arrangements for entertaining the members were all that could be desired. The hospitality shown by Providence citizens very considerably contributed to the pleasure of the week.

After addresses of welcome had been made by Governor Higgins on behalf of the State, by Mayor McCarthy on behalf of the city, and by President Faunce on behalf of Brown University, the two organizations began their programmes on the afternoon of Tuesday, November 19, with a paper on *The Battle for Betterment*, by Hon. Clinton Rogers Woodruff of Philadelphia. This paper contained a comprehensive résumé of the more important developments in various American cities during the past year with comments upon their significance. A paper by Hon. Brand Whitlock, mayor of Toledo, O., on *National Parties in Local Elections* contained some pertinent observations upon the desirability and possibility of eliminating party lines in local politics. Mayor

Whitlock's presentation of the matter furnished basis for a spirited discussion, some of those present urging that it was neither desirable nor practicable to cast adrift all the trammels of national party allegiance in civic elections. While this discussion was proceeding the members of the American Civic Association held a round-table conference on the subject of Definite Work for Small Communities. Among those participating were Prof. Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard University, Mr. Frederic A. Whiting of Framingham, Mass., and Miss M. L. Dock of Fayetteville, Pa., a member of the Pennsylvania forestry commission.

The Tuesday evening meetings were devoted to papers upon the general subject of preserving natural beauty from commercial spoliation, and dealing more particularly with the work being done for the preservation of Niagara Falls. Equipped with stereopticon views several speakers gave addresses on this topic, among them Gen. Francis V. Greene of the Ontario Power Company, Mr. H. H. McCrae of the Electrical Development Company, Mr. Charles M. Daw of the New York State Reservation Commission, and Mr. John W. Langmuir of the Niagara Falls Park Commission of Ontario. The work of the McKim Commission was also described by Prof. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., of Harvard University, a member of this body. The addresses disclosed the strength of the popular movement which has rallied itself to the cause of preserving Niagara from the inroads of power corporations, as well as the readiness of the latter concerns to meet the leaders of this movement at least half-way.

On Wednesday morning the National Municipal League devoted its meeting to the general topic of local taxation. Hon. Lawson Purdy, chairman of the board of taxes and assessments in New York opened the discussion with a paper on A Model Plan of Taxation in which he described what he considered to be the proper subjects of local taxation and the proper method of imposing taxes upon these. Local communities, he thought, should have power to determine what subjects should be taxed locally, and also the rate at which these should be assessed, the legal necessity of uniformity being a great obstacle to an equitable and effective system of local taxation. Dr. Delos F. Wilcox, secretary of the Detroit Municipal League, followed with a well-written paper on The General Property Tax in Cities in which he emphasized the various points at which the tax is liable to encounter obstacles and especially its influence as tending to establish "a school of perjury and concealment." The speaker strongly advocated the entire abandonment of the general property tax both in theory and in practice. The Taxation

of Savings Banks was the subject of the next address, given by Charles E. Sprague of New York, in which the incidence of this branch of taxation was discussed at length; and the morning's programme closed with a paper by Mr. H. T. Newcomb of Washington, D. C., on The Taxation of Railways. The speaker made a strong plea for the "gross earnings tax" as the only one free from insurmountable objections, as being collectible at a minimum of cost, and as the most capable of equitable adjustment.

At its separate meeting the American Civic Association held an informal conference upon Municipal Adornment and Parks. The discussion was opened by Dr. John Quincy Adams, secretary of the Municipal Art Commission of New York, who spoke of the scope, purposes, and achievements of this body. A paper dealing with The Railroad as a Factor in Civic Improvement was presented by Joseph T. Richards, general engineer of the Pennsylvania Railroad in which were pointed out many lines along which the municipalities and the railroad might, through coöperation, contribute substantially to the improvement of what is almost always an unsightly area in the community, the strips adjoining the railroad right of way. Along similar lines was the address of George W. Wildin, mechanical superintendent of the N. Y., N. H., and Hartford Railroad on the subject of The Smoke Nuisance on Locomotives. "A good, intelligent fireman," said Mr. Wildin, "is the only really successful smoke preventive." Part of the session was devoted to a discussion of the billboard nuisance, papers on this subject being read by Mr. Harlan P. Kelsey of Salem, Mass., and Edward T. Hartman, secretary of the Massachusetts Civic League. The subsequent discussions elicited opinions from a number of those present.

At the afternoon sessions of Wednesday the National Municipal League held a round-table conference on Electoral Reform. The subject was introduced by Mr. Thomas Raeburn White of Philadelphia, counsel for the Committee of Seventy, who emphasized the desirability of holding State and municipal elections in alternate years. Mr. Richard L. Gay, secretary of the Election Reform League of Massachusetts discussed the results of experience in the Bay State along this line, and Mr. Robert Treat Paine, Jr., of Boston, laid stress upon the fact that the evils of national and State party intrusion in municipal campaigns are not necessarily eliminated by legislation fixing a time separation between local and State elections. The discussion of the subject, which was highly interesting and profitable, was continued by Mr. Elliott H. Pendleton of Cincinnati and Mr. George Burnham, Jr., of Philadelphia. Hon. Robert Luce, member of the Massachusetts legislature, then gave an

interesting description of the workings of the Massachusetts joint primary law, or "Luce Law" as it is popularly called, of which he was the sponsor. This paper was discussed by Mr. Horace Deming of New York and by Hon. Charles J. Bonaparte, attorney-general of the United States, the latter making a plea for the simplification of nomination and electoral procedure.

At the Wednesday evening joint session of the two organizations President Bonaparte of the National Municipal League delivered his annual address, the subject of which was Government by Public Opinion. The audience was very large and appreciative. "After all," said Mr. Bonaparte, "the most effective instrument of coercion possessed by society against its weaker or more dangerous members is the influence of public opinion." The address embodied a plea for a more impartial and faithful reflection of public opinion by the press. "There is one thing that the newspapers must do if they would be, in the field of politics or in any other, an agency for good, and that is to think and to tell the truth. No worthy end was ever achieved through deception, whether of ourselves or of others."

The proceedings of Thursday morning related to the Forces Moulding the City of the Future, with addresses by President W. H. P. Faunce of Brown University, Hon. Homer Folks of New York, and Hon. Clinton Rogers Woodruff of Philadelphia. In the afternoon there was a discussion of the various experiments now being made in the direction of simplifying the framework of municipal government. The Galveston plan of city government was described in a paper by Prof. William Bennett Munro of Harvard University, in which the merits and defects of the Texan system, so far as these could be judged in the light of Galveston's experience, were set before the members. A paper by Mr. Silas B. Allen of Des Moines, Iowa, was read by Eliot H. Goodwin of New York, descriptive of the provisions in the new Des Moines charter. In this the writer emphasized the value of the provisions in the charter relating to the use of the initiative, the referendum, and the recall. Rear-Admiral F. T. Chadwick followed with an explanation of the Newport system of city government. The speaker believed this plan to be superior both in theory and in practice to the Galveston and Des Moines systems in that it observed a sound canon of local government in keeping separate the appropriating and the expending authorities. Admiral Chadwick thought that the fusion of large powers in the hands of a small commission afforded, if not subjected to the strictest supervision, unlimited possibilities of evil.

The sessions of the American Civic Association during this period were given over to conferences on the subject of Work Among the Children in Large Cities, and among the speakers were Mrs. Edwin F. Moulton of Warren, O., Miss Mabel Hill of Lowell, Mass., Prof. Charles F. Kent of Yale University, and several others. Considerable attention was given to the matter of instruction in civics in the public schools and the consensus of opinion was that the association ought to undertake an active propaganda along this particular line.

Members of the two associations joined forces on Thursday evening in a banquet at The Eloise, at which short addresses were made by several of those who had taken a leading part in the regular sessions. The affair was unusually successful as were the other social features of the convention among which were a smoker at the Brown Union and a reception at the home of President W. H. P. Faunce. The whole arrangements for the convention were in the hands of Hon. Clinton Rogers Woodruff, secretary of the National Municipal League, to whom much of the credit for their successful outcome is due. An invitation to hold the next annual gathering of the two associations at Portland, Me., was received from the city authorities and from the board of trade; and it is likely that this place will be chosen. Both associations reelected their chief officers to serve another term.

Several months ago the mayor of Boston, acting in concurrence with the other organs of city government, asked several of the leading unofficial organizations of the city, among them the chamber of commerce, to select representatives to a finance commission, the duty of which body it should be to make a thorough and impartial investigation into the financial condition of Boston and to report the results of their investigations together with recommendations as to the means whereby the municipal expenditures might be reduced without impairing the efficiency of civic administration. This commission was duly organized, its membership comprising some of the most prominent business men of the city, and the investigation has already covered a number of important civic departments. Some preliminary reports have been made to the mayor and some recommendations offered. On the whole the work of the commission has not disclosed any widespread corruption or glaring inefficiency; at the same time it has brought to light a good deal of minor extravagance, incompetency, and evasion of the law by officials of the civic administration. The commission's disclosures undoubtedly contributed substantially, if not decisively, to the outcome in the

recent mayoralty elections at which the Fitzgerald administration was ousted from office. Mayor John F. Fitzgerald was opposed for reelection by two candidates, one of whom was supported by the regular republican organization, the other by the Independence League. This division of the forces opposing the mayor's reelection seemed likely, at one stage, to guarantee his hold on the office; but as the election returns showed, the candidate of the Independence League drew a large vote from the regular democratic ranks, thus ensuring the election of Mr. George A. Hibbard, the republican nominee, by a plurality of slightly over two thousand votes. Mr. Hibbard had the support of most of the substantial business men of the city and his election affords hope that the municipal administration of Boston will be noticeably improved during the ensuing two years.

The Norfolk League of American Municipalities, at its recent convention, singled out the following features as worthy of emphasis in the work of the league for the coming year: (1) the desirability of securing adoption by towns and cities of some system of uniform accounting in order that expenditures may be susceptible of comparison; (2) the need of insisting more rigorously upon the principle of municipal "home rule" and of obtaining for municipalities a larger discretionary power in matters relating to local administration; (3) the advisability of instructing and educating the masses of city voters not in the principles of good citizenship, but in a proper understanding of the powers of municipalities, and the duties of officials thereunder.

President C. W. Eliot of Harvard University has contributed to the October number of *The Worlds' Work*, an instructive article on city government by commission.

When the general charter law enacted by the legislature of New York State for cities of the "second class" goes into operation on January 1, 1908, there will be seven cities included in this category, namely, Albany, Rochester, Troy, Utica, Schenectady, Syracuse, and Yonkers. Each of these municipalities has a population of more than 50,000 and less than 250,000.

M. Lepine, the efficient prefect of police of Paris, France, has arranged that a certain number of the police of that city shall be taught English, German and Spanish in order that they may the more effectively perform the work of directing strangers about the city. These policemen will be distinguished from their less accomplished comrades by an arm

badge bearing a reproduction of the flag of the country whose language they have mastered. They will be placed on duty at the railway terminals, and in those sections of the city which are most commonly frequented by foreign visitors.

As a result of its investigations the civil service commission of Chicago has decided to establish a "labor bureau" which will have exclusive charge of the civic labor service. Registration of eligible laborers will be conducted according to a geographical classification so that laborers residing in one part of the city will not be certified to work in districts inconvenient to them.

Among the delegates recently elected to the Michigan constitutional convention is Prof. John A. Fairlie of Ann Arbor, professor of administrative law in the University of Michigan, and secretary of the League of Michigan Municipalities. In connection with the work of the convention Professor Fairlie has contributed to a recent number of the *Michigan Law Review* a timely article, entitled, Some Suggested Changes in the Constitution of Michigan.

In its recent report the public ownership commission of the National Civic Federation expresses the conclusion that no scheme of municipal operation is likely to be highly successful if it does not provide, among other things, for the "exclusion of political influence and personal favoritism from the management of the undertaking." A system of civil service reform is thus given emphasis as a necessary preliminary to satisfactory municipal operation of public utilities.

The Civic League of Albany, N. Y., has established a publication in the interest of municipal reform under the title of *The Albany Citizen*.

A voters' league has been organized in Cincinnati for the purpose of investigating and passing upon the records of all candidates put forward by the party organizations for municipal office. It is established, in general, along the lines followed by the Good Government Association of Boston.

Mayor George W. Guthrie of Pittsburg has appointed the first Pittsburg civil service commission under the new civil service law.

The twenty-seventh annual meeting of the National Civil Service Reform League was held at Buffalo, N. Y., on November 7, and 8. Hon. Joseph H. Choate was elected president to succeed Dr. Daniel C. Gilman who declined reelection. A number of the papers dealt with

the question of civil service reform in cities, a phase of the whole question to which the league is now giving a large share of its attention.

Some years ago the National Municipal League published, through the Macmillan Company, a volume entitled *A Municipal Program*. This book is now out of print and in view of the favorable reception accorded it and its important influence in connection with the framing of charters in several States, the league has arranged for a new and revised edition. The work of revision is in the hands of a committee headed by Mr. Horace E. Deming of New York.

The League of American Municipalities has become sponsor for a compilation of data relating to a large number of American cities which has been published under the title *An Authentic Summary of Civic Progress and Achievements*. The work includes much interesting information concerning the activities of sixty-seven cities of varying size.

The voters of Toronto, Canada, in November last, approved a proposition to borrow a sum of over three-quarters of a million dollars for an extension of the waterworks system. Out of a registered vote of over 32,000 only 1224 ballots were cast; nevertheless the proposal was declared to have been carried. The situation does not appear to emphasize the success of the practice of holding a referendum on all questions relating to civic borrowing, a requirement imposed upon the cities of Ontario by the provincial legislature.

The general assembly of Missouri in its special session in the spring of 1907 passed an "enabling act" authorizing all cities of the State to regulate by ordinance the charges for gas, telephone, street-railway, and other public services and to establish commissions with power to investigate the books of companies operating such utilities; summon witnesses and recommend rates to the council; the right of the companies to obtain judicial determination as to the reasonableness of the rates fixed by ordinance is secured. St. Joseph is so far the only city which has taken a definite step towards the exercise of the authority conferred by the statute; her council on December 9 passed an ordinance providing for a public utilities commission to be composed of the mayor, the president of the council, and three members of the council selected by the president of the council.

The movement in Kansas City for the creation of such a commission has so far been unsuccessful because of the failure of the two houses of

the council to concur upon a plan for the constitution of the commission. The measure which is championed by Mayor Beardsley and which has passed the upper house provides for a bi-partisan commission of six members appointed by the mayor subject to confirmation by the upper house. The lower house has refused to ratify this measure and proposes instead a commission of three members, each house to appoint one of its own number upon the commission, the third member to be an outside expert nominated by the mayor and confirmed by both houses.

Several bills to establish a public utilities commission have been introduced in the St. Louis assembly and have been referred to a committee which is directed to recommend a plan for the constitution of such a commission.

The project for the construction in St. Louis of a free municipal bridge across the Mississippi river seems now, after nearly a two years' campaign through the newspapers and mass meetings, well on its way to realization. At a special election in June, 1906, a municipal ordinance, providing for the issue of bonds to the amount of \$3,500,000 for the purpose of building the bridge, was approved by a popular vote of 51,000 to 6000. In that month, also, the city obtained from congress the franchise to use the Illinois bank of the river for the eastern terminal of the bridge. Then after a year's delay—in the course of which time the supreme court had confirmed the validity of the bond issue—a bill fixing the site of the bridge passed the upper house of the municipal assembly—June, 1907. The bill remained in the lower house five months; several citizens' meetings were held demanding immediate action, and the bill was finally, on November 8, passed by a large majority. Mayor Wells vetoed it on the following grounds: that the location was unsuitable with regard to its availability for steam railway, street car, wagon, and pedestrian traffic; that the plans outlined in the bill would require an expenditure of \$5,000,000 instead of \$3,000,000, that the annual cost of maintenance as compared with the probable usefulness would be too great; and that there were serious technical defects in the general design projected in the bill. The bill was immediately repassed over the veto by a practically unanimous vote in both houses. Subsequently an ordinance was passed providing for the sale of \$1,000,000 worth of bonds, and authorizing the board of public improvements to secure the consent of the government to the site selected. When this is obtained the comptroller will proceed to the issue and sale of the bridge bonds, and plans for the bridge will be prepared under the super-

vision of the board. The bridge will provide free passage for pedestrians, wagons, street railways, and steam railroads.

PERSONAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

J. W. GARNER

The fourth annual meeting of the American Political Science Association was held at Madison, Wisconsin, December 27-31. At the same time and place annual meetings were held of the American Historical Association, the American Economic Association, the American Sociological Society, the American Association for Labor Legislation, and the Mississippi Valley Historical Association. The entertainment of the members of the associations was undertaken by the Social Sciences Club of the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin State Historical Society, and was bountiful to an extreme. A large number of the members of the Political Science Association were registered as in attendance and the papers read were uniformly interesting and valuable. The addresses will be published during the early spring as volume four of the Proceedings of the Association. The several sessions were devoted to a discussion of the following subjects: The Latin-American Republics, the Newer Institutional Forms of Democracy, The Government of Dependencies, Comparative Legislation, The Administration of Punitive Justice, and Public Service Commissions.

The secretary of the association reported a gratifying increase in membership during the year, the present enrollment being a trifle over six hundred as compared with three hundred and forty a year ago. So expensive, however, is the publication of the REVIEW, that the association is not yet self-supporting. It is hoped, however, that the membership will continue to increase at the same rate during the current year. Present members of the association are earnestly urged to send to the secretary the names of those of their associates or acquaintances who it is thought may be interested in the work and publications of the association, in order that he may communicate with them by letter, circular or specimen copy of the REVIEW. Experience has shown that it is almost wholly in this personal manner that new members have been obtained.

In order that, beginning with 1909, the volumes of the REVIEW may correspond with the calendar year, it was decided to omit the publication of the August, 1908, number and have the November, 1908, issue constitute the fourth number of volume two. It was voted to hold the