

MUNICIPAL NOTES

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LOCAL TRANSIT AND MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP. Probably the most pressing problem before American cities at present is that of securing satisfactory methods of local transportation. In one form and another the problem is being actively discussed in many of the principal cities. And in most places the problem includes both the technical question of securing adequate facilities, and the question of policy as to the relative degree of public and private control. Notably in Chicago, Cleveland and Detroit, extensive plans for street railways have been discussed and important decisions have been reached. And among the largest cities in the eastern States increased facilities are being provided by means of subways and elevated railways in New York, Philadelphia and Boston.

Chicago presents the most important and most interesting situation. As a culmination of the ten years contest with the street railway companies and the more recent agitation in favor of municipal ownership, new ordinances were passed by the council in January, and adopted at a popular referendum on April 2. These provide practically for a joint partnership between the city and the companies. The latter will for the present continue to operate the lines, and furnish capital for a thorough rehabilitation of the antiquated system; but the city has the right to purchase the plant at any time on six months' notice, at a fixed price (\$50,000,000) for the present plant, and the cost of the new improvements. Through lines and transfers from any district of the city to the others are to be established. The city will supervise the new construction, has large powers of control over the service, supervision over the accounts of the companies, and will receive 55 per cent of the profits after paying operating expenses, taxes and five per cent on the actual investment. A decision of the supreme court of Illinois, on April 18, that the Müller law certificates must be included within the city debt limit, leaves the city without adequate financial means to purchase the plant.

In Cleveland there has been a long contest between Mayor Johnson and the Cleveland Electric Company, complicated by protracted litigation. New franchises had been granted to another company on a basis of three cent fares; while another corporation, the Municipal

Traction Company, organized to act as a trustee for the city, had leased these lines, and begun operation in November. The Cleveland Electric Company asked for a twenty years' renewal of its franchises, on the basis of seven tickets for a quarter, with a provision for purchase by the city at the end of that period, as an operating concern. Mayor Johnson declined to submit this offer to a popular referendum, unless the company would agree to an alternative proposed for leasing all its lines to the Municipal Traction Company. In January a decision of the United States Supreme Court sustained the claims of the city as to the dates when the former franchises expire, but held that under the Ohio law the city could not take possession of the property. After this decision the Cleveland Electric Company opened negotiations for leasing its property and unexpired rights to the Municipal Traction Company; but these soon came to an end, and the contest has become acute.

In Detroit a franchise extending the expiring rights of the Detroit United Railway Company was defeated at a popular referendum in November. Franchises which begin to expire in 1909 were to be extended until 1924, when all rights were to run out at the same time. A schedule of fares was named with different rates at different periods of the day, estimated to average about 3.6 cents; but this involved an increase on some of the existing lines where eight tickets are now sold for twenty-five cents. Provisions for purchase by the city "as a going concern," and the absence of adequate requirements for publicity of accounts were also criticised.

New York City has now 22 miles of subway in operation, carrying as high as 600,000 passengers a day. The tunnels to Brooklyn will soon be in operation. Surveys have been made for 165 miles of new underground routes, to cost the stupendous sum of \$300,000,000; and contracts have been authorized for two lines,—one on Lexington Avenue, and one on Seventh, Eighth and Jerome Avenues. A third route connecting Pelham Bay Park in the borough of the Bronx with Coney Island via Brooklyn is ready for contract. But no satisfactory bids have been received for the construction of new lines.

In Philadelphia there was opened in February a subway railroad under Market street, continued as an elevated railway across the Schuylkill river and further to the west.

The new Washington Street subway in Boston has been substan-

tially completed, and it is expected that it will be in use by the close of the year. Definite arrangements have finally been made for the construction of a subway from Park street to Harvard square in Cambridge, by a tunnel under Beacon Hill, and the new Cambridge bridge on the Charles river. The latter subway will be built by the Boston Elevated Railway Company, whereas the previous subways in Boston have been constructed as municipal works. A project has also been presented for another subway through the Back Bay district under the proposed Charles river embankment.

The municipal ownership commission of the National Civic Federation has about completed the report of its elaborate investigation. Minutely detailed studies have been made of the leading municipal and private plants in the principal cities of Great Britain and the United States. And these, with the digests and summarized report will present a body of reliable data on which to base further discussion of this question.

Major Leonard Darwin, late of the British Royal Engineers, delivered in April a course of four public lectures on Municipal Ownership in Great Britain, under the auspices of Harvard University.

Laws for public control of corporations operating municipal and other public utilities have been passed by the New York and Wisconsin legislatures. The New York act provides for the abolition of several existing State and local commissions, and the establishment of two new boards, appointed by the governor, one to deal with all public utility corporations (including railroads) in New York City, and the other to deal with similar corporations in the remainder of the State. The Wisconsin measure will extend the powers of the railroad commission over all companies operating plants to supply power, light, heat or water to or for the public.

NEW CHARTERS AND LEGISLATION. A number of important measures dealing with the organization of municipal government are either before State legislatures or have been enacted into law. A new and comprehensive special charter for the city of Chicago has been passed by the legislature of Illinois. Changes in the local government of the metropolitan area including Boston and vicinity are being considered. The Kansas and Iowa legislatures have passed statutes authorizing the system of commission government recently

developed in some of the Texas cities, and sometimes known as the Galveston plan.

The proposed new charter for Chicago is the most important of these measures. It involves a return to the method of special legislation, after thirty years under general municipal laws. The original Illinois municipal act of 1872 provided a flexible system of machinery adjustable to large and small cities. But in recent years many additional detailed laws have been enacted, nominally of general application, but limited by referendum clauses, and intended distinctly for Chicago. A few years ago an amendment to the State constitution was adopted, definitely authorizing special legislation for Chicago, subject to a local referendum. A few minor changes were made by acts passed in 1905, but the present measure covers the whole subject of municipal organization.

This measure has been framed by a special convention, established by ordinance of the city council. The members were appointed from various sources—by the mayor, the council, the governor of the State, and the presiding officers of the two houses of the State legislature. This convention has been at work for fully a year; and the bill has thus been the result of a more careful consideration and more thorough discussion than most measures of the kind.

One of the main purposes of this movement has been to consolidate the heterogeneous group of municipal authorities that have developed in Chicago. Another purpose has been to enlarge the powers of the local authorities. But owing to conflicting forces in both respects the desired results have been only partially provided.

So far as consolidation is concerned, the board of education will be made more definitely a branch of the city government; and the three autonomous park boards will be united into one board, which is definitely correlated with the city government. But the sanitary district trustees and county government will remain distinct and independent local authorities—the county continuing the unorganized body of officials as heretofore.

In dealing with the powers of the city authorities the attempt is made to secure broad grants of authority in general terms. But at the same time the influence of existing practices is evident in a greatly increased volume of detailed regulation, which, in the form of defining grants of power more exactly, have the practical effect of limiting

the scope and methods of future action. The result is that the new charter, while still much briefer than the bulky legislation for the city of New York, is a much larger document than the previous laws affecting the city of Chicago. And it is almost inevitable that the adoption of this charter will cause a steady increase in the amount of detailed special legislation that will be demanded in the future.

So far as the main features of municipal organization are concerned, the new charter follows the leading principles of the general Illinois law. There will continue an elected council and an elected mayor and city treasurer. But these are to be chosen for four year terms (the term of the mayor had been already extended by an act of 1905); while the city clerk and city attorney are removed from the list of elective officials. In the legislature the number of members in the council was reduced to fifty, and the city redistricted into fifty wards. The act does not go into effect unless approved at a popular referendum in the fall.

In Buffalo a charter commission appointed by the mayor last year, had also prepared a complete revision of the charter of that city. But owing to local opposition it became evident that this could not be enacted in its entirety at this session of the legislature. Accordingly a bill was prepared and introduced in the legislature to amend the existing charter, so as to introduce what seemed to be the most important and most urgent of the changes proposed. This bill provides for a reorganization of the council, and would have greatly increased the powers of the mayor. But even this measure is not likely to pass at this session of the legislature.

Litigation still delays the actual consolidation of Pittsburg and Allegheny, as provided by an act of the legislature passed last year. The supreme court of Pennsylvania has sustained the constitutionality of the statute. But the question has now been carried into the United States courts.

For some years past the Massachusetts State authorities have had laid before them various proposals for the better coördination of the different public services in the Boston Metropolitan District, At present the more important utilities, such as water supply, sewage disposal, parks and transit are placed directly or indirectly under the supervision of several independent metropolitan commissions, the members of which are appointed for long terms by the governor of the

commonwealth. These commissions exercise varying degrees of jurisdiction within the dozen or more municipalities surrounding the city of Boston, all of which, however, lie within a radius of ten or twelve miles. A measure is now before the legislature providing for the appointment of a special commission whose duty it will be to investigate and report upon some plan either for the amalgamation of the various municipalities into a Greater Boston, or for some organization such as will render more facile the coordination of the various municipal interests. It is proposed that this commission shall consist of five or seven members, appointed partly by the governor and partly by the mayor of Boston. Its procedure will, it is expected, be something akin to that followed by the royal commission on the amalgamation of London some years ago.

The proposed new charter for the city of Cambridge, Mass., which was presented to the legislature at its last session and laid over, has been revived in a slightly altered form. A leading feature of the charter is the proposal that all paid municipal employees from highest to lowest shall be appointed under civil service regulations.

The Connecticut State commission on uniform charters for cities, has adopted a resolution that it is impracticable to draft laws that will make charter provisions relating to cities uniform and practicable. The commission has, however, collected and printed replies to a series of questions relative to the charter provisions of the various cities in the State.

Two special commissions on municipal affairs provided by the New Jersey legislature in 1906, have reported. One recommended a uniform fiscal year for all cities, a scale of debt limits and a state auditor of municipal accounts. The other favored the continuance of the present system of taxing the gross earnings of public utility corporations, in preference to a system of dividing excess profits.

At a recent meeting of the Economic Club of Boston, President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University addressed the members on the defects of the present framework of city government in the United States. He suggested that the cities of New England might find it advantageous to revert to a modified system of government by selectmen, vesting the administration of affairs in the hands of a small body of men elected by the citizens at large—a system not far removed

from the commission plan as established in Texas and provided for in Kansas.

Both of the new Kansas commission laws are optional, one for cities of the first class—those having more than 15,000 population—the other for cities of the second class. For the larger cities which adopt the act, there will be a commission of five members. One will be mayor, and will also act as commissioner of the police and fire departments; and the others will have charge respectively of finance and revenue, waterworks and street lighting, streets and public improvements, and parks and public property. For cities of the second class the commission will consist of but three members.

Several of the larger cities of the State, notably Topeka and Wichita, are planning to vote on the adoption of the commission system at special elections to be held in the fall of 1907, or the spring of 1908.

The Iowa law is optional for cities of over 25,000 population. It provides for a mayor and council of four members, in whom are vested the control of the municipal government. These officers are to be elected on a nonpartisan ballot. Other provisions will establish the merit system in appointments, and the initiative and referendum. The plan has been adopted by Des Moines.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICS. At the November elections the most important cities choosing municipal officials were Detroit and Minneapolis. In Detroit, William B. Thompson, democrat, was elected mayor—on the street railway issue. The republicans continue to control the council by a large majority, but the decline of partisanship was illustrated by the unanimous election of David E. Heineman as president. In Minneapolis, former mayor Haynes was again elected over David P. Jones, the result indicating a reaction from the reform policy that has been in force in regard to police matters.

Los Angeles elected city officials in December. There were three tickets in the field, republican, democratic, and non-partisan. The non-partisan candidate for mayor Arthur C. Harper, was elected by a plurality of 2000; and there is excellent prospects for an honest and capable administration. The city council was much strengthened by the election of new members. Several amendments to the city charter were adopted, and others defeated.

Philadelphia in February elected as mayor, John E. Reyburn, the

organization republican candidate, over the city party nominee, W. H. Potter. This result was due, in part to dissensions in the city party, and to the charge that the city party was aristocratic. Mayor Reyburn is personally a man of good character but is an avowed partisan and his administration will doubtless mean a reaction, but not a return to old conditions. There will be a considerable minority of city party men in the councils.

San Francisco local affairs have been prominently in the public eye for several months. The exclusion of Japanese from the public schools by the board of education raised constitutional and international questions. The constitutional issue has been avoided; and international difficulties have been settled by an agreement under which Japanese laborers will be excluded from this country. Disclosures of long suspected corruption in local politics have led to the indictment of Mayor Schmitz, Abraham Ruef, his political organizer, and many minor officials. Ruef has confessed. Schmitz has been convicted and prominent business men have become implicated.

Municipal elections in London, both for the metropolitan borough councils in November and the county council in March, have been marked by the defeat of the progressists, and the success of the moderates or reform party. This result has been freely described in this country as a defeat for the municipal ownership policy; and it means no doubt that there will be a reaction from the aggressive policy followed in recent years. In particular, the plans for a centralized municipal system for the supply of electric power will probably be abandoned. But, apart from the financial failure of the Thames steamboat service, the criticisms of the progressists were based, not so much on their management of undertakings connected with the municipal ownership movement in this country as on the extravagance and more pronounced socialistic tendencies in connection with the management of schools and means of recreation, and on some more flagrant cases of mismanagement, as in the Poplar board of poor law guardians. The election was notable for the unusually large vote polled. The *Spectator*, while approving the results, notes with regret the replacement of many experienced members of the county council by new and untried men.

In the provincial British towns, the annual November elections do not seem to have been of especial moment. In Birmingham the

unionists failed in their attempt to defeat one of the ablest members of the council because he had not followed Mr. Chamberlain's tariff policy. This is the more notable, as national politics have been a more important factor in Birmingham municipal elections than in any other British town.

Early in April, municipal elections were held throughout many States of the middle west, from Michigan to Montana. Much the most important contest was in Chicago. Here, F. A. Busse the republican candidate was elected mayor over E. F. Dunne, the main issue being the street railway ordinances, which were approved at the same time. Mr. Busse had the united support of both old and new political leaders of his party, and also the endorsement of President Roosevelt. Sweeping changes have been made in the heads of departments and also in the civil service commission and the school board.

MISCELLANEOUS. New city clubs have been established in Boston and Cincinnati. These are somewhat similar to the city clubs in New York and Chicago, but in Boston the club is organized on a broader basis, including public officials as well as private citizens interested in public questions. A number of addresses have been given by men prominent in municipal affairs of the vicinity, frequent "round table conferences" have been held on various subjects; and the committees have been active and influential in local administrative matters.

State leagues of municipal officials are becoming a prominent educational influence in municipal affairs. Meetings of the Wisconsin, Iowa and Pennsylvania Leagues were held last August and September. A new League was organized in North Dakota in December. The Michigan League held its ninth annual convention at Detroit, June 6-8. The Indiana League met June 18-21. The Texas Mayors' Association met July 5-6.

The League of American Municipalities has moved its headquarters to New York City. The next annual convention will be held at Norfolk, Va., September 19-21, in connection with the Jamestown Exposition. The American Society of Municipal Improvements will meet in Detroit, September 17-19. The National Municipal League will meet in Providence in the week of Nov. 19, in conjunction with the American Civic Association.

The board of aldermen and the common council of the city of Boston have concurred in voting an appropriation to defray the expenses of a special commission for the investigation of the city's finances. The members of the commission are to be named by five prominent unofficial organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Merchants' Association, etc. When duly constituted, the task of this commission will be to investigate the financial condition of the city, the methods of accounting, feasible means of increasing the civic revenues, and the possibility of any retrenchment in expenditures. The Boston financial situation has during the last few years given ground for apprehension and there has been a growing demand for a thorough enquiry. It is thought in some quarters that the present move on the part of the city authorities is designed to forestall any action on the part of the State legislature as proposals for a financial investigation have recently been laid before this body.

The Bingham Police Law, recently enacted, very largely increases the power of the police commissioner of New York City over the organized police force. Since Mayor Low's administration, the police commissioners of New York City have been men of the highest personal integrity; but they have been seriously hindered in their efforts to root out the corrupt practices in the police force by the independent position of the subordinate officials and patrolmen. The new law increases the commissioner's power over the chief officials and the detective service, by making these temporary assignments instead of permanent posts.

A bureau of municipal research has been established in New York to secure publicity and intelligent supervision of the executive departments of the city. Among its stated objects are, to promote efficient and economical municipal government; to secure the adoption of scientific methods of gathering and reporting the details of municipal business with a view to facilitating the work of public officials; to secure publicity in matters pertaining to municipal problems, and, as a means to these ends, to collect, classify, analyze, correlate, interpret and publish facts as to the administration of municipal government. The staff of the bureau at present includes a director and ten accountants and directors. It is now engaged in studying the operation of the health department, and will, at an early date, take up the water supply, gas and electricity, the dock department, and rapid

transit system. Among the incorporators are E. R. A. Seligman, Albert Shaw and Richard Watson Gilder.

The Baldwin prize of \$100, given by the National Municipal League in memory of the late James H. Baldwin, has been awarded this year to Thomas A. Thacher, a junior in Yale University, for the best essay on *The Relation of the Modern Municipality to the Water Supply*. Nine essays were submitted, representing various parts of the country from Rhode Island to California. Special mention was made of the paper by Abraham Pinanski of Harvard on the Metropolitan Water Works System of Boston. The committee of judges consisted of Thos. R. White, Esq. of Philadelphia, Prof. Hector J. Hughes of Boston and Prof. J. W. Garner of the University of Illinois.

Governor Hughes has appointed Dr. Milo R. Maltbie as one of the members of the newly created public utilities commission of New York. Mr. Maltbie received his doctor's degree at Columbia and was for some years the editor of *Municipal Affairs*.

A report of the commission on municipal ownership of the National Civic Federation, a work upon which twenty-five expert accountants, engineers, economists and other specialists, have been engaged for more than a year and a half, has appeared from the press. The report contains the results of an inquiry into the operation of four leading public utilities: Gas, water, electric lighting and street railways. The investigation covered the management of twenty-nine private and public plants in America and twenty-four in Great Britain. The report appears in two parts contained in three volumes, the first being of a general and somewhat popular character, the second containing the reports of the experts on special subjects. Among the contributors to the report are Prof. F. J. Goodnow, Walter L. Fisher, E. W. Bemis, Milo R. Maltbie, Prof. Jno. R. Commons, Prof. L. S. Rowe, Lord Avebury, Robt. McDonald, Robt. P. Porter, and many others. It is not too much to say that this report embodies the results of the most exhaustive inquiry into the subject ever undertaken. The price of the report, bound in cloth, is ten dollars, and it may be had of E. A. Moffett, secretary, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York.