

value" of industrial or commercial properties seriously affected by Governmental competition in the only type of business for which these properties are suitable, the buildings being in the same condition as before the inception of such competition, but the value for business purposes a small fraction of their previous value?

(c) What is the "actual value" of properties which are vacant, and have been vacant for a long time, and which it seems to be impossible to rent or to obtain any return therefrom?

(d) What is the assessor to do in the case of an admittedly valuable property, for which tenants can be obtained only by accepting a rental which is a small fraction of what *should* be paid?

(e) How far should an assessor reduce the value of a property in paragraph (b) above?

(f) How is an assessor to deal with properties which have been allowed to depreciate and to fall into disrepair, such as warehouses, and waterfront properties and wharves, mainly for the reason that government competition has drawn the greater part of the business from such properties and has greatly reduced the income?

(g) How is the value of a property in an urban municipality affected by the fact that it is situated on elevated ground and the facilities of the municipal water department are not sufficient to

provide a supply of water to the property?

(h) How far should an assessor be influenced by the artificial lowering of values of real estate due to the depression?

(i) Should the assessor annually write down the value of all property which is not kept in repair and which is gradually depreciating in value?

(j) Should municipalities grant "fixed assessments" (so-called) to new industries or businesses?

(k) Should exemptions be granted to churches, schools, colleges and to certain corporations carrying on business but exempt under special Acts of the Legislature?

(l) Lastly and decidedly not least, is it at all equitable that the Nova Scotia Provincial Highway tax should be based upon the municipal assessor's valuation in all parts of the province when it is acknowledged that the bases of valuations vary from 100% as low as 50% and perhaps even less? Should not in fairness to those municipalities which are complying strictly to the law, assessing real property at its full value receive some compensation from the Government when it is recognized that they are paying more than their just proportion of Highway Taxes as compared with such taxes paid by those municipalities in which the real property assessment is a fraction of the full value?

The Municipal Manager Plan in Small Cities¹

By ORIN NOLTING*

THE administration of municipal services in a small municipality differs from that in a large city only in the size of the job and the number of services. The problems and the methods of dealing with them do not vary greatly. Both large and small cities, regardless of the form of government, need to have one trained official who can coordinate and direct these services because city government is becoming more and more technical. It is the rapid growth in the technical character of municipal services that has emphasized the need for coordinated management and a trained administrative staff, which both the old mayor-council and commission plans have failed to provide, mainly for the reason that it cannot be expected that the

average candidate running for election as city commissioner can be a good executive as well as a good vote-getter. In fact, the first city to adopt the council-manager plan in U. S. A. was the small city of Staunton, Virginia, where in January, 1908, the mayor and bi-cameral council, worried over the inefficiency of council committees in handling administrative problems, passed an ordinance authorizing the hiring of a "general manager", and delegated to him the direction of all administrative affairs. Now there are 249 municipalities in the United States with less than 10,000 population operating under this form of government. Of these, seven have less than 1,000, 57 have from 1,000 to 2,500, and 184 from 2,500 to 10,000 population. Of the 14 council-manager cities in Canada, eight have less than 10,000 population. Thus of the 460 cities which now operate under the council-manager plan, 55.6 per cent had a population in 1930 of less than 10,000.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Orin F. Nolting is Assistant Director of the International City Manager's Association and Managing Editor of "Public Management", Chicago, Ill.

1. The word city in this article means any incorporated municipality.

MAIN FEATURES OF MANAGER PLAN

Briefly, the main features of council-manager government are as follows: A small council elected at large on a non-partisan ballot determined policies which are not set forth in the charter itself, adopts ordinances, votes appropriations, and is required to appoint a chief executive officer called a city manager. The council is the governing body of the city, and the city manager is its agent in carrying out the policies which it determines. The mayor, who is usually elected by the council from its own number, does not interfere with the administrative functions of the manager, nor do individual members of the council. It is definitely understood that the council deals with administration only in a formal manner through ordinances and resolutions, and that administrative functions are at no time delegated to committees or individual members of the council.

The city manager, the head of the administrative branch, is appointed by the council as a whole. The theory is, and the charter provides, that he be selected on the basis of his training, ability, and experience. The exercise of all administrative authority is concentrated in the appointive executive who is accountable to the council. He provides the council with information which enables it to determine municipal policies, advises the council in matters of policy if the council so desires, and executes the policies determined by the council. He introduces the best principles of advanced administrative organization and practice, and is held responsible for the proper co-ordination of all administrative activities under his direction.

In the small city the manager may hold several other positions. For example, in one city the manager also acts as chief of police, city assessor, city engineer, and public works and water superintendent. In another city he has nine titles in addition to that of city manager. The reason is that in some activities there is not enough work for one man to be assigned to each function, but as the city increases in size and the manager's duties increase, other employees are added to take over certain work under his direction. The duties of a manager in a small town are largely what may be termed "outside" activities—streets, utility plants, sewers, and other engineering work. This explains perhaps why over one half of the present managers in small towns have had engineering training.

ADVANTAGES OF MANAGER PLAN

A summary of the advantages of the council-manager plan, as compared to the other forms of city government, would include:

1. **It is more responsive and more responsible.** The council is generally smaller and is elected at large on a non-partisan ballot for overlapping terms. This does away with log rolling

and ward politics. Few other officials are elected thus giving the people a better chance of knowing for whom they are voting. Also more attention and interest is centered on the small council after it is elected because of the publicity which is given to actions of the council as a whole and as individuals.

"The function of the council is not to do the work," wrote John Stuart Mill many years ago, "but to see that it is properly done, and that nothing necessary is left undone." The manager plan gives the council full control over the city government but at the same time effectuates a separation of policy-determination and policy-execution. For the council to interfere in the work of administration, where special skill is nearly always required, is to defeat the ends of good government. The council appoints the manager for an indefinite tenure and can remove him at any time. There is no long wait until the next election to get a new executive. If the council finds that the manager does not do the job as he should, the council can bring charges and put him out of office. The manager also does not need to fix political fences and get out the vote for election day and therefore can devote his full time to his job.

2. **It is more economical.** The city manager sees the city government as a whole and installs up-to-date public administrative procedures including such well-known devices as budgetary allotment and control devices, pre-audit and cost control, centralized purchasing, modern assessment methods, adequate accounting procedures, and other procedures which are so commonly found in manager cities. According to a survey made by the National Municipal League, local government costs the taxpayer less when it is operating under the council-manager plan than in cities having other forms of government. This was revealed by a study of the adjusted tax rates in 261 cities of over 30,000 population, that is, the rate per \$1,000 of full value.

3. **It makes possible coordinated administration.** The manager plan unquestionably gives the manager more time for administrative supervision than the mayor-council plan gives the mayor. It has a tendency to insure the appointment of responsible subordinate officials based on professional qualifications rather than for political strength and to insure their continuance in office so long as they efficiently perform their work. It tends to make for an incentive for personal service in office. Perhaps one of the most important arguments the manager plan presents for effective government is that it permits the manager to coordinate the various functions and services of government, not necessarily under one direction but at least all coordinated in such a way as to avoid a clash between different units. It makes possible the elimination of what might be termed

"legal exactitude", more frequently called "red tape".

Another important principle of management is that under the manager plan accurate and honest information is at all times available to the public and the manager spends considerable time in making such data available. An important factor referred to above is that the members of the council do not interfere with the administration of departments or even indicate to department heads that they have certain friends or political henchmen who would like to have jobs in the city hall. All of the council's contacts with the administration are made only through the manager, and the manager properly resents any direct interference by the council in any phase of administration. Individual members of the council, therefore, do not importune the manager on appointments, contracts, purchases, or any other administrative matter.

4. **It makes possible the effective administration of public service.** The technically trained department heads adopt the best procedures available in administering their departments. The manager exercises over-all control by establishing standards for measuring activities and developing procedures for systematic inspection of conditions and performance for the purpose of maintaining the standards. He sees that every office plans its work in advance and that all department programs make a consistent program for the entire city government. He eliminates the spoils system and makes appointments solely on the basis of ability, training, and experience.

WHAT MANAGERS SAY

A number of city managers in cities of less than 5,000 population were recently asked: Briefly, what do you think are the advantages of the manager plan in a small city? Some of the replies received were:

"In a small city the city council needs meet only a couple of times a month and under the old plan the various departments had very little supervision. There was no purchasing agent, and it

was very hard to check the bills and to determine who purchased the material and where it was used."

"The city manager plan in this city enables the council to establish and follow a much sounder financial program, makes possible the close co-ordination of all activities, and enables the maintenance of better relations with other nearby cities."

"...To ask a city council to look after these and many other items at the expense of their private business would be asking a little too much."

"It expedites the administration of city affairs and gives the citizens service in small towns which they seldom get when they must depend solely on elected officials who are serving for very little compensation."

CITY MANAGEMENT A PROFESSION

City managers now recognize themselves as constituting a new profession of public administrators. A number of leading universities provide special training for city management, desirable qualifications are fairly well established, and a selection procedure has been developed. Their professional organization, the International City Managers' Association, established in 1914, aids in the improvement of local government administration in general, provides extension training courses for managers on the job, issues a monthly journal, *Public Management*, devoted to the conduct of local government, publishes the *Municipal Year Book*, and holds an annual conference.

The spread of the council-manager plan since 1908 is indicative of the new attitude toward municipal affairs in the United States and Canada, and there is a distinct recognition of the demand for trained executive ability which the planning and directing of the intricate program of modern municipal administration requires. The profession of city managership has contributed not only to the science and art of public administration generally, but also to the integration and unity of local government.

