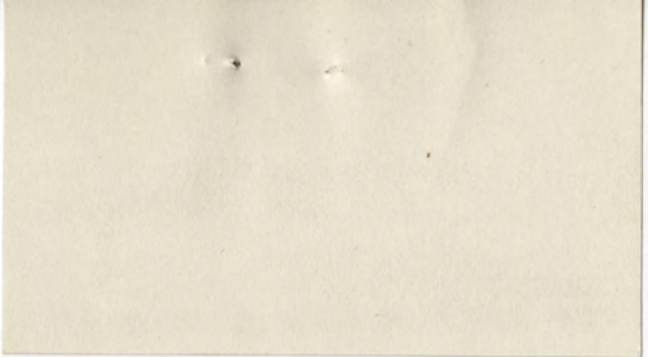


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AUGUSTUS R. HATTON

WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

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CLEVELAND



*City Manager
Plan*

CITY MANAGER PLAN FOR CLEVELAND

Herewith is the report of the majority of a committee of fifteen appointed to investigate the desirability of the city-manager plan for Cleveland, Ohio.

This committee was thoroughly representative, and twelve took part in the final action. One member of the committee died before the report was formulated. Two did not sign either the majority or minority report. Of the remaining twelve the following seven approved this report.

Sam W. Emerson: Successful contractor on large scale.

D. S. Humphrey: Widely known as a successful conductor of large scale clean amusements. These include Euclid Beach Park and the "Elysium," artificial ice rink. Also president Ohio Good Roads Association.

A. R. Hatton: Professor of Political Science, Western Reserve University. Field Director The National Short Ballot Organization. Widely consulted authority on city charters. Member commission that framed present charter of Cleveland.

Dr. J. D. McAfee: Physician. Former superintendent of the Cleveland City Hospital

Robert McDermott: Composer. Member and former secretary Typographical Union

G. A. Laubscher: Attorney

Dr. J. E. Tuckerman: Physician. Former secretary Cleveland Academy of Medicine. Member commission that framed present charter of Cleveland.

TO THE CIVIC, LABOR, SOCIAL, PROFESSIONAL AND
BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS OF CLEVELAND

The Committee of Fifteen, appointed by Judge Alexander Hadden, Dr. Charles S. Howe and Thomas G. Fitzsimons, in accordance with the action of more than twenty-five representative Cleveland organizations, to investigate and report to them as to the desirability of the city manager plan of government for this city, herewith submits its report embodying the conclusion at which it has arrived.

The committee was appointed in December 1916 and began its investigations early in 1917. Numerous meetings were held and a final report would have been submitted much earlier had it not seemed desirable to discontinue the activities of the committee for the period of the war.

In the course of its investigations the committee was addressed by a number of leading authorities on city government. Officials and citizens from cities now operating under the manager plan were asked to appear before the committee and several did so. A special effort was made to have the ablest and most active opponents of the manager plan living in those cities address the committee and a number of such opponents were given a hearing. All meetings of the committee, attended by other than its members, were open to the public and citizens of Cleveland were invited to be present. Many of our citizens addressed the committee and any desiring to do so were invited to express their views. In addition to the information obtained from addresses and hearings the committee collected a large amount of printed material. This has been carefully examined and has been useful in the formulation of the recommendations which follow:

I.

As a result of its investigations the committee reports that it believes the manager plan as herein outlined is not only practicable but desirable for the city of Cleveland. In making this recommendation the committee is aware that the present charter of Cleveland is one of the best of its type. However, the excellences of the present charter are not all, or chiefly, in the form of government there set up. The features that have been most admired and copied elsewhere are those relating to the initiative and referendum, the budget, accounting and financial procedure, departmental organization, public improvements, public utilities and the broad grant of home rule powers. None of these features would be affected by a change to the manager plan.

The form of government provided by the Cleveland charter no longer attracts attention. In fact it is regarded as belonging to a type rapidly becoming obsolete. It is noteworthy that, of the Ohio cities adopting home rule charters, only five have followed the Cleveland plan, and no home rule charter of that kind has been adopted in Ohio during the last two years. On the other hand, at least nine Ohio cities and one village have adopted the manager plan, the latest city to do so being Akron. The same cities which refused to follow our leadership in retaining the so-called federal plan have copied extensively the other provisions of the Cleveland charter above mentioned.

The present Cleveland charter was not regarded by many of the members of the commission that framed it as providing the best plan of government. The most important duty before the charter commission of 1913 was to frame a charter which the voters would be sure to adopt in order that the city might make use of the home rule powers granted by the constitution. For that reason changes in the form of government then existing were reduced to a minimum. Having secured full home rule powers by adopting a charter, Cleveland may now address itself to the task of working out the best possible plan of government.

The government of this city is a great cooperative enterprise. Its only legitimate purpose is the common good of the people of Cleveland and upon its success depends in no small degree the happiness and well-being of a great majority of those who live under it. The importance of the city government in the lives of our people will become greater and not less. In recent years its activities have steadily expanded and this process is sure to continue in the future. As a result of this expansion of activities and of rising costs, the financial contributions which the people will be called upon to make for the support of the city government are certain to be greater in the future than in the past. The only return that can be expected for such contributions is in service rendered to the people. If, through capable management, the return in service is adequate this increased expenditure for government may well be a good investment even from an individual financial point of view. On the other hand if, with increased financial burdens, the service rendered is not obviously greater the present discontent and distrust of organized government will continue and become more marked.

There is no disguising the fact that we are confronted in this country, and particularly in the cities, with widespread lack of confidence in our governmental institutions. This lack of confidence is not confined to any one class. The substantial tax payer voices it quite as frequently as the agitator who urges direct action. Their reasons may be different; the results are identical. At the same time the movement for greater democracy in government grows and it is clear that the only way out is forward and not back.

It requires only the slightest analysis of existing conditions to disclose the reasons for this situation. Successful popular government must meet two tests:

- (1) Its policies must be a prompt reflection of the popular will formulated after the various elements in the community have been heard.
- (2) Policies once determined must be carried out promptly, effectively and without waste.

To accomplish the first of these objects demands a legislative body that is truly representative. The present council of the city of Cleveland meets this test only imperfectly. In character and intelligence its members are doubtless fairly representative of the average citizen. However, the council does not number among its members the real leaders of the various important groups and interests of the city. As a result, its consideration of questions coming before it is lacking in penetration, its discussions are usually perfunctory and never of a high order. In spite of the honesty and average intelligence of its members, the people do not turn to the council with confidence for the solution of community problems. It is in no sense what it should be - a continuous round table dealing with city affairs.

Your committee believes that the creation of a city council which will meet the standard above indicated is absolutely necessary if Cleveland is to have a government that will be either efficient or command the confidence of the public. There can be no hope that a council chosen by the present method will ever meet that standard. Men of the type needed in the council will not become candidates. The effort in time, money and energy that must be put forth by one seeking election to the council excludes many. The compromises which must usually be made both to secure office and to be reelected are distasteful to men of force and independence.

The committee therefore recommends that the charter of Cleveland be so changed as to provide for electing the council by proportional representation. The results that would follow such a change are not matters of theory or conjecture. The council would become thoroughly representative of the more important interests and groups in the city and therefore representative of the city as a whole. The leaders of opinion, now outside the council, would more and more be found in that body. The council would improve in ability. Majority opinion would prevail, but before decisions were reached every considerable minority group would have a hearing through an accredited leader. The membership of the council would be more stable and not as now subject to violent fluctuations through the change of a few votes here and there in the city.

In order to secure these results it would not be necessary to elect the councilmen from the city at large, tho that can be done if public opinion favors such a change. The committee believes that the most satisfactory method would be to divide the city into a few relatively large districts, each choosing from five to nine councilmen. By this method the same results as to representation would be obtained as by election from the city at large, and candidates

would be relieved of the difficult task of getting their views before the entire city. The division of the city into districts could not be abused in the interests of a party or faction because, with proportional representation, gerrymandering is ineffective and useless.

The committee also believes that the council should consist of from fifteen to twenty-five members. Even a slightly larger number would not be undesirable.

The committee further recommends that the council so chosen elect one of its members as presiding officer with the title of mayor. In addition to his duties as councilman and presiding officer of that body, the mayor would be the ceremonial head of the city, acting as its representative in the various social capacities which now consume so much of the time of the chief executive of the city.

II.

The committee believes that the most fruitful cause of the prevailing distrust of government is the lack of effective administration. Even more than the unrepresentative character of our legislative bodies, this has sapped confidence in our political institution. Only too often laws and ordinances representative of public opinion are rendered ineffective through unintelligent and inefficient execution. Through wastefulness, arising from careless and inefficient administrators, the people are constantly deprived of services which they have a right to expect. Too large a portion of the dollar appropriated for public purposes never benefits the voter in services actually performed but fades away in the hands of untrained and careless public servants. For this condition it is not fair to blame any particular person or political party in the city of Cleveland. It is the natural product of the political administrative system set up by the present charter. It will only be eliminated when we devise means for excluding partisanship from the administrative service of the city.

The present charter of Cleveland places the execution of public policies in the hands of an elected mayor who appoints, and may remove, all heads of executive departments. As a result we have a series of originally untrained and politically short lived chief executives. Heads of departments are appointed primarily because they supported the mayor at the last election or will aid him in seeking reelection. The mayor represents a political party and, therefore, if he goes out of office as a result of a shift in party fortunes, all heads of departments go also. Thus we are in a continual process of training mayors and department heads only to lose them about the time they become worth their salaries. Moreover, under the present system no mayor or head of department, however able or well intentioned, can give his undivided attention to his executive duties. He must constantly prepare for the next election and he usually insists that his subordinates give their time for the same purpose. In this manner the entire administrative service of the city is vitiated by partisan politics and its efficiency kept at a low ebb.

Another undesirable condition resulting from the present system is the lack of continuity in executive policy. Every new mayor comes in with a more or less new program. He may not be hostile to the chief projects favored by his predecessor but, in the nature of the case, he feels that he must have a program of his own which differentiates him from those who have gone before. That is good practical politics but it is fatal to effective administration. It results in a constant shifting of emphasis and in the neglect or abandonment of undertakings begun under previous mayors.

The existing system also tends to prevent that careful planning for years ahead which is essential to the future development and highest welfare of the city. A politically chosen mayor is not easily interested in any undertaking that must be begun now but will not bear conspicuous fruit until after he is likely to be out of office. He is too much inclined to be impressed only by those issues with which a showing can be made before the end of his term. In fact he is usually careful to hold back public work that could have been done sooner in order that he may make a great show of activity just before election.

The successful administration of city affairs calls for well-trained executives. It is clear that such executives cannot be obtained by the present method of choice. Men of real administrative ability are usually averse to campaigning for public office. They are so much in demand in private employment that they will not go about begging the people to elect them to a job which they may lose at the next election. In fact, "we the people" have been poor employers. We have set up, and are continuing, a system which makes it impossible for us to get the best talent to work for us. We shall only be able to get capable persons to serve us in an executive capacity when we can assure them of permanent tenure so long as they do their work efficiently. Other self governing countries found long ago that executive talent could not be secured through popular election. Nearly a hundred cities in the United States have already abandoned the attempt to do so. In taking this step these cities have not only increased the efficiency of their governments but have brought them more fully under popular control as well.

In view of these facts the committee recommends that the council elected as already described choose a city manager to serve during the pleasure of the council. The manager so chosen would appoint all heads of departments, with the possible exception of the director of law and the city auditor. Theoretically there are arguments in favor of having these officers chosen by the council, but in practice appointment by the manager has been found to work equally well, or even better. The manager would be responsible to the council for the effective administration of the departments placed in his charge and would advise the council either directly or through his subordinates of the needs of the city.

Everyone admits that "politics" has no place in the administrative service of the city. The plan above outlined opens the way for its elimination. The people can trust a council chosen by proportional representation to appoint and supervise a city manager. Such a thoroughly representative body is more likely than any other agency to choose a chief executive on the basis of fitness alone and to protect him in his work so long as he renders efficient service. While such a council may be expected to have differences of opinion on matters of public policy, its members can readily agree that policies approved by a majority of the council shall be effectively carried out.

There is nothing either theoretical or conjectural in the above recommendations. Every essential feature has stood the test of experience. City governments so constructed are proving themselves not only more efficient but far more democratic than the type of government under which Cleveland finds itself at this time. A striking proof of the effectiveness of the manager plan is found in the wartime experience of the manager governed cities of this state. With the stringent financial limitations imposed upon Ohio cities none of them has fared as well as might be desired. But while the cities with the old time governments have been proceeding with great difficulty, falling deeper and deeper into debt and curtailing services at every point, the manager cities have weathered the storm with a fair degree of success and several of them have actually avoided the issuance of any deficiency bonds whatever. At the same time, and in spite of the tremendously increased cost of labor and material, these cities have maintained their services at very nearly the previously standard.

For the sake of brevity this report deals only with general principles and presents the recommendations merely in outline. However, the plan is so simple and understandable that, even as here presented, its essential features are readily grasped. The method of marking and counting the ballots in an election by proportional representation, and the discussion of results secured elsewhere under that system of voting, are omitted as details belonging rather to a campaign of public education. The drafting of charter changes designed to carry out the recommendations of this report would not be difficult.

Your committee submits its conclusions in the confident belief that, if the changes recommended should be written into the Cleveland charter, the people of the city would thereby provide themselves with a far more democratic and efficient system of government than that under which they now live.

Respectfully submitted.

February 10, 1920.

Dear Mr. Hatton:

Thank you very much for the copy of the report on the city-manager plan. Its principles apply absolutely to conditions in Chicago, and I hope that some day there may be enough wisdom here to give serious consideration to the question.

Very truly yours,

Mr. Augustus R. Hatton,
6 West 9th Street,
New York City.

HPJ:ME

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