

MANAGER SYSTEM IN USE IN 753 AMERICAN CITIES; ARTICLES SUPPORT PLAN

That the City Manager system is the most honest and progressive form of city government is pointed out in two publications of the past week, drawing considerable interest in Torrance in view of the efforts of the Citizens' Committee to have the City Charter amended to provide a City Manager here.

One is a report of the talk of Dr. C. A. Dykstra before the International City Managers Association convention in Coronado, last week. Dykstra, now provost of University of California in Los Angeles, formerly was City Manager of Cincinnati from 1930 to 1937.

When the city manager system was inaugurated in this country, many called it "subversive" and "dictatorial," but today it has been accepted by more than 700 cities as the "most honest and progressive" form of municipal government, Dr. Dykstra declared.

"Life" magazine carried a full page editorial in its issue of last week on "Reform Is Sweeping the Cities," declaring that "even the best City Manager needs a vigilant citizenry to make it last."

The article traced graft and corruption of such cities as Kansas City, Mo., Cincinnati, Minneapolis and other metropolitan communities of more than 20 years ago, and how much of it had been corrected through the City Manager form of government.

It pointed out that as early as the 1880's, Lord Bryce, in American Commonwealth, declared that government of cities was one of the conspicuous failures of American democracy.

The article credits "really fighting civic-minded newspapers" with overcoming municipal government corruption.

To quote from the article in part: "The National Municipal League, with reports from every state, says flatly that the U. S. is now having the greatest surge of local reform in history. Some of this is due to veterans who came back with reinvigorated ideas of democracy: in Athens, Tenn., they turned the rascals out at gun point. Some is due to the pressure for higher wages by city workers and teachers; with so many exacting eyes on them, city fathers find it harder to clip away a dishonest dollar. But the most significant thing about the present reform wave reaction, Americans now appear to have sufficient political ma-

turity to know what they want and how to get it.

"Electing a good mayor is good, but not good enough. Minneapolis, for example, elected a fine man named Hubert Humphrey, Jr., a teacher of political science. Once in City Hall he sent for a department head and asked for some information preliminary to a reorganization. The department head looked at the mayor coldly and replied, 'I have 26 bosses upstairs in the city council. They require all my time. I can't take care of you.' The new mayor thus learned with a bang that his city suffered from 'charteritis.' He has therefore led a campaign to revise the charter: so it will center more power in the mayor's hands.

"Good municipal government is a fairly new science in America, though our reforming itch is an old one. Only a couple of generations ago the average town offered police and fire protection and little else. Utilities, including water, were more often than not private enterprise. So was welfare, or charity. Health departments were unheard of until New York got the bright idea. Traffic problems were not even a Detroit dream.

"So almost anybody with a strong handshake and a Prince Albert coat was qualified to serve as mayor.

"The usual reform pattern was to fanfare the scandal and use it to elect some patently honest burgher, preferably with conspicuous church connections. His virtue was expected to give him the wisdom to cope with selfish politicians and the knowledge to direct a growing complexity of municipal affairs. No wonder so many reforms fizzled in disappointments. The best of them left strong charters but weak and corrupt mayors in their wake.

"But one reform did not fizzle: Cincinnati's. Anybody interested in improving any city government, small or large, cannot do better than study what Murray Seasongood, Charles P. Taft and others did for their home town.

"Cincinnati was being run by a character named R. H. Hynicka via long distance from his New York burlesque theater. But the

Slough, Harbor Area Viewed By Representatives

A tour of the Harbor district Sunday concluded the inspection of public works projects in this area by members of the Public Works Committee of the House of Representatives.

The Congressmen will consider the advisability of repairing the outer breakwater, additional dredging in the harbor and development of Bixby Slough as a part of the Inner Harbor.

Splitting into two groups, the committee Saturday inspected shore line developments from Playa del Rey to Newport Beach and flood-control projects in the Whittier Narrows basin area and at the San Antonio Dam site.

Rep. Gordon L. McDonough of Los Angeles, a member of the group, said the committee plans to authorize nearly \$8,000,000,000 for public works in a report to the next session of Congress. Approximately \$100,000,000 of this amount will be earmarked for the Los Angeles County area during the next five years, he said.

Cincinnati reformers knew they had to do something more than just abolish Hynicka. They decided that a professional city manager, a man trained and experienced in running the business of a municipality, would be their best bet as a replacement for the gang. This was not an original idea. City managers had been gaining in repute for more than a decade. But Cincinnati's reformers observed that a manager's success would depend on the quality of the city council that hired him and set his policies.

Proceeding to explain how Cincinnati overcame its City Council politics and declared with such administrations as that of C. O. Sherrill and Dr. Dykstra, "nearly every administrative department has been a model.

"The debt has gone down, so have taxes. It's been a clean city for 22 years. It has repulsed repeated attempts to mess it up again. For behind its good machinery is a wide-awake group of citizens who know that constant vigilance is the price of good government.

"This success has inspired other cities. Cambridge, Mass., had got about as corrupt as you can get in 1942. Even the mayor was in jail. Then the League of Women Voters, some Harvard professors (including Dean Landis of the Law School) and other good citizens put over a plan similar to Cincinnati's. Already taxes have been cut 23%, while the wages of city employees have gone up an average of \$500. The cost of paving, always a graft thermometer, has been cut from a high of \$2.50 a yard to an average of 60c.

"And now the Cambridge example is spreading to five other Massachusetts cities: Somerville, Medford, Worcester, Fitchburg and Pittsfield are voting on adoption of a similar plan this fall. Indeed, 81 U. S. communities, including Hartford, Connecticut, adopted the city manager plan last year. That is nearly twice the record of any previous year. Already this year 66 communities have adopted it and many more, including Richmond, Va., are expected to vote it in during the autumn elections. No less than 753 American cities now have managers, one out of every four above 10,000 population."

In timely manner, and as if to vindicate the efforts of the Citizens Committee in Torrance to install the City Manager form of government here and end its administrative and financial dilemma, the article states:

"No city retains its title as the Cradle of Liberty (or even the Hub of the Universe) without fighting for it. Good government exists only where the people keep everlastingly at it. Pericles regarded the man who holds aloof from public life 'not as quiet, but as useless.'"

Torrance Citizens Committee will meet on November 4 to receive a report of the subcommittee on the City Manager Charter amendment which it is hoped can be placed on the ballot in time to get ratification at the session of the California Legislature opening in March, making it effective on July 1, 1948.

They want a manager in full control of administrative affairs rather than an "administrator" under City Council control as proposed by Mayor J. Hugh Sherry, Jr.

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