

NEWS AND NOTES

CURRENT MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

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The city of Chicago has encountered unusual difficulties in its efforts to procure a new charter. Three years ago a charter convention was organized and after a great deal of persevering labor presented its report to the Illinois legislature embodying with this report the draft of a new charter for the city. This draft was considerably amended before the Legislature permitted it to be placed before the voters at the polls. These latter rejected it by a substantial majority. The convention was, however, reorganized and proceeded with its work, this time submitting not a single measure but a number of measures for the legislature's consideration. Eleven charter bills in all were sent by the convention to the legislators at Springfield; but not one of these proved sufficiently acceptable to secure its passage in either house. Matters remain, therefore, just about where they were three years ago. Two special measures relating to Chicago were placed on the statute book, however, one of them increasing the city's bonding power by about \$16,000,000. The other, which slightly amended the municipal court act, must be accepted by the Chicago voters at the next election before it becomes operative.

The proposed New York charter seems likewise to have met its obstacles and to have found these difficult to surmount. This charter bill was introduced in the New York senate on March 10 and in the house of assembly on the following day, but was not favorably reported in either. On April 15 a resolution was introduced and adopted in both houses providing for the organization of a joint recess committee consisting of three senators and five assemblymen to examine and consider the charter and the administrative code as these had been reported by the Ivins charter commission. This joint committee was instructed to report to the legislature not later than February 1, 1910. As constituted, this joint committee now consists of Senators Brough, Gledhill and Grady, with Assemblymen Hammond, C. F. Murphy, Robinson,

A. E. Smith, and Geoghegan. Those who are best informed concerning the attitude of the legislature entertain serious doubts of a favorable report upon the present proposals.

While the Ivins charter and administrative code embodied many commendable features these proposals did not evoke much popular enthusiasm and this doubtless encouraged the Albany legislators to take their time. One reason for the lack of enthusiasm may without doubt be found in the fact that the mayoralty election is now drawing near and the interest of a large section of the voters is more readily concentrated upon the question as to who shall be the next mayor than upon questions relating to what the next mayor may do. Mayor McClellan has now been in office for six years and while his official conduct has been on the whole satisfactory to perhaps the majority of New Yorkers he has been vigorously condemned for many of his appointments and in connection with many of the plans which he has supported. His action in the Bingham Case has been particularly resented in very many quarters. His alliance with the leaders of the Tammany Hall organization has not been, until recently at any rate, as close or as loyal as these latter could desire and it is at least doubtful whether he could obtain the regular Democratic nomination were matters pressed to a decision at the present time. Much will depend upon the capacity for united effort which the various opponents of Tammany manage to show during the near future.

New York has undergone a considerable awakening during the last few years, although this has been brought about so quietly that it has not been fully realized throughout the country. For this awakening the City Club, the Citizens' Union, and above all the bureau of municipal research have been primarily responsible.

On January 29 last, after eighteen months of loyal labor, the members of the Boston finance commission made their report to the Massachusetts legislature. The report, which is one of the most comprehensive of its kind, is now being printed in four parts. The first part is introductory and historical in character, tracing the development of Boston's government from the time of its settlement as a town down to the present day. Special attention is given to the charter of 1822 and the charter of 1885, this latter being the basis of Boston's administration until the present year. Part two of the report contains a critical survey of existing administration with special attention to the Fitzgerald

administrations of 1906-1907. Twenty pages are devoted to a scathing arraignment of Mayor Fitzgerald and his methods, and, if the strictures of the commission be true, as they doubtless are, one can find no better description of the way in which a city's treasury may be raided by political spoilsmen than that contained in this part of the report. Part three of the report discusses present defects and proposed remedies, while the final portion of the report contains the commission's draft of a new charter.

The finance commission proposed many radical departures from the orthodox type of city government, including among these a four-year mayoralty term with the privilege of recall at the end of two years, a city council of nine members elected at large for a three-year term and one-third retiring annually; and the entire abolition of the ward system. Further the commission proposes that all nominations should be made by petition instead of by joint primary as heretofore, that all appointments made by the mayor to headships of departments should be certified by the Massachusetts civil service commission; that no proposal for the expenditure of money should be originated by the council; and that a permanent commission of five members, named by the governor of the state, should be established and that this body should be entrusted with the duty of constantly watching the course of administration in the interests of the public.

The proposed charter encountered vigorous opposition and equally vigorous support. When it went before the appropriate legislative committee for hearings several alternative schemes were presented, most of these having in view less radical departures from the existing system. One of these schemes, that of ex-Mayor Edwin U. Curtis, enlisted a considerable following and it was finally determined by the state authorities that at the next city election the voters of Boston should be given the opportunity of choosing between this scheme and certain of the finance commission's proposals. Most of the commission's recommendations were legislated into effect at once; the only matters which go to the people are those connected with the size of the city council, the length of the mayor's term, and the methods of making nominations.

Much of the credit for the success with which most of the important recommendations of the commission were put through the legislature is due to the committee of one hundred, an organization formed solely to achieve this end.¹

¹For a further account of charter revision in Boston, see the note of Dr. Flack in Notes on Current Legislation.

Immediately after the Boston charter bill had passed the legislature the governor appointed the permanent commission for which the measure provided. The chairman of this body, who receives a salary of \$5000 per year, is ex-Congressman John A. Sullivan, a member of the finance commission and a prominent member of the democratic party. Four other members, who serve without pay, were also appointed. This body is given no powers of a mandatory nature; its sole duty is to investigate any action of any city authority which may seem worth investigating and to publish the results of such enquiry.

The Good Government Association of Cambridge, Mass., has been reorganized under the name of the Cambridge Taxpayers' Association. All members who pay annual taxes of over \$100 contribute 2 per cent of their taxes and this money is used to employ the services of a paid secretary whose duty it is to look after the interests of the taxpayers at City Hall.

An interesting series of articles dealing with the proposed amendments to Chicago's charter have been published during the past few months in the Chicago *Evening Post*.

Among recent publications relating to the administration of foreign cities are A. Veber's *Le Socialisme municipal* (Paris: Giard & Brière, 1908, pp. 63); H. S. Lunn's *Municipal Lessons from Southern Germany* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1908, pp. 148); J. Le Valois's *Le régime de l'électricité à Paris* (Paris: Giard & Brière, 1909, pp. 154); P. Ducceschi, *La municipalizzazione dei pubblici servizi* (Turin, 1908); P. Morel's *La police à Paris* (Paris, 1908); and A. Ramelli's *Des attributions de la commune en matière civile et commerciale* (Paris: Rousseau, 1908).

The Civic League of St. Louis appointed a charter revision committee to frame suggestions concerning the proposed new charter for the city and after careful study and deliberation this committee has presented to the league the results of its sittings. The report has been printed under the title of *A Plan for a New City Charter*. Fourteen propositions have been agreed upon and these are stated in axiomatic form, but each is accompanied by a page or two of comment setting forth the reasons which led the committee to agree upon each successive point. The whole forms a highly interesting and instructive document.

The William H. Baldwin Prize of \$100 offered by the National Municipal League for the best essay on *The Practical Working of Government in Some Large American City* has been awarded to Henry Warren Cleary of the Junior Class in Harvard College, with honorable mention of Francis S. Wyner of the same class in the same institution. Fifteen essays were presented in competition by students from seven different colleges and universities. The judges were Elliott H. Pendleton, Esq., of Cincinnati; Mr. John A. Butler, of Milwaukee, and Prof. Augustus Raymond Hatton, of Western Reserve University. The subject for next year's Baldwin prize competition is *City Government by Commission*, and a descriptive circular concerning the terms of the award may be had on application to Hon. Clinton Rogers Woodruff, Secretary of the National Municipal League, North American Building, Philadelphia, Pa. Competitors must be "undergraduate students in some American college or university which offers distinct and independent instruction in municipal government."

Hon. Nathan Matthews, ex-mayor of Boston and chairman of the commission which drew up the new Boston charter, has accepted an invitation to give a course of lectures at Harvard next year on *The Government of the City of Boston*. Mr. Matthews is well known to students of government throughout the United States owing to his *Municipal History of Boston* which he published several years ago.

A new volume on *Municipal Government*, by Prof. F. J. Goodnow, is announced to appear this autumn.

NINE ELECTIONS IN ONE YEAR.

F. H. GARVER.

Recently, certain influences have tended greatly to increase the number of elections in many states and localities. Chief among these influences have been the growing tendency to put into actual operation the principles of the primary and of the referendum. A concrete example may be seen in the experience of Sioux City, Iowa, during the year 1908. In this town of 50,000 inhabitants nine regular or special elections were held during the year named. The essential facts concerning these elections are as follows: