One of the substantial improvements in which the Pittsburgh civic commission had a large share as mentioned above was that of the removal of the hump described by U. N. Arthur in the July, 1914, issue of the NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW (vol. iii, p. 547).

HOW TO MAKE STATE LEAGUES OF MUNICIPALITIES EFFECTIVE¹

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THE first problems arising in connection with increasing the efficiency of state municipal leagues are perhaps among the simplest, though not by any means necessarily easy of solution. The first question naturally would be whether the unit of membership should be the municipality or its officials. It seems to me that for practical purposes it must be a combination of both features.

The unit so far as membership and voting rights are concerned should, in my opinion, be the municipality, for only by giving to the cities as such in their corporate and continuing capacity the character of members, can the continuity of the league itself be insured. Of course municipalities, like all other corporations, public or private, can act only through individuals and those individuals are the municipal officials. The active personal participation, therefore, can come only through the persons who act as agents of the municipalities. The simplest solution of the problem would seem to be that the municipalities, as such, should be the legal members, paying the dues and exercising the voting rights through their representatives or delegates, while all of the higher municipal officials should be regarded as the active participants in the co-operative work of the league.

In addition to the municipalities, which through their officers are or should be most interested in the activities of the league, there are other sources of help and co-operation which should not be neglected. These are the commercial clubs, civic clubs, libraries and other organizations and institutions interested in municipal welfare, as well as a number of individuals who, though not belonging to any such organization, have public spirit enough to wish to promote the cause of good city government.

¹See article on "The League of California Municipalities," by H. A. Mason, NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW, vol. ii, p. 111.

²Paper presented at the 20th annual meeting of the National Municipal League, Baltimore, November 18, 1914. Professor James in addition to holding a chair in the University of Texas is also secretary of the League of Texas Municipalities.

It seems self-evident that the effective support of these sources should be enlisted, and the conventional division of membership into active and associate members seems to furnish a convenient method of bringing these factors into play. Let the municipalities be the active members and exercise the voting privilege, let their officers be the principal participants in the official work of the league, but by all means encourage all non-official organizations and individuals to assist the league by contributions and to derive benefit therefrom by receiving its publications, by being invited to its meetings and by being encouraged to keep in close touch with the permanent officials of the league.

The question of dues presents somewhat more difficulty. It seems desirable, as will appear a little later, that the league should not be subject to interference by the state government. Appropriations by the legislature for the purposes of the league would, it is believed, almost invariably carry with them some such undesirable interference. So far as possible, therefore, the activities of the league should be supported by the membership dues, although a helpful co-operation in other ways on the part of the state authorities would undoubtedly result in much mutual benefit. We are, therefore, face to face with the problem of prescribing a membership fee small enough so that it will not be considered as a burden by the municipalities, and yet large enough to furnish the necessary funds for a valuable activity on the part of the league. Graduated membership dues for municipalities on the basis of their populations would seem to be a fair and logical arrangement, although it was objected to in the constitution of the League of Texas Municipalities, and was there replaced by a provision for one membership fee for cities under 5,000 and another fee for cities over 5,000, no matter what their size. It would probably be expedient in organizing a state league to put the membership fee at the lowest possible figure and by gradually enlisting the interest of cities through their officials and secretaries and by showing in what concrete ways the league may be of value to all cities in the state, to open up the possibilities of increasing the membership dues for the purpose of still further increasing the scope of activity of the league.

The problem of getting municipalities to join the league is also full of difficulties. It would not seem to be expedient to require by state law, as has sometimes been suggested, that all municipalities should join and pay their membership dues. In every state there will be a number of cities in which the officials are really anxious to take advantage of every opportunity for solving their problems and will, therefore, vote the membership dues without any kind of external pressure. If pressure must come, and undoubtedly in every state there will be many cities in which the governing body will not act in the premises except as a result of pressure, it would be better that such pressure come from within than from without. In other words, civic clubs and influential individuals in the city can

be used to advantage in inducing the city officials to take the necessary action, and, it may be added parenthetically, such action on the part of unofficial agents would be more probable and more likely to be successful if those agents themselves had a connection with the league such as was indicated above. With the increasing size and effectiveness of the state league it will undoubtedly become less and less difficult to enlist further members.

The second group of considerations suggested in the program for this meeting, viz., those referring to meetings and publications, seem to present somewhat greater difficulties. With regard to the frequency of meeting, I believe it may be assumed that an annual meeting is all that can be hoped for. The expenses of holding the meeting and the travelling expenses involved would probably point to that conclusion and if it did not, I believe that the tradition in favor of annual meetings is so strong that any attempt to increase the frequency of such meetings would be doomed to failure. I am assuming here that the meetings should come at least once a year. The length of the meetings would perhaps be affected somewhat by the geographical conditions of the state. A meeting of municipalities in Rhode Island would not involve any great expenditure of time and money in the matter of attending, so that the question of making the meeting worth the expense of attending need not be considered, but if the state league is blessed, as is Texas, with a working area of 263,000 square miles, then it would seem desirable to make the meetings of sufficient length to warrant the expenditure of time and money involved in merely getting to and from the meeting place. Probably three days would represent the upper limit of efficiency.

With regard to the character of the program, my own feeling is that one of the chief benefits to be derived from such a gathering of municipal officials is the interchange of personal, practical experiences, and that very little of real lasting value is taken away from the hearing of learned and lengthy disputations, but that much may be gained from personal questions at a round table or informal discussion. For purposes of advertising, it is undoubtedly wise that one or two well-known experts along certain lines be secured to address the meeting as a whole. But sections for the different classes of municipal officers with suggested problems and a considerable amount of informal discussion seem to me to promise the greatest good from the conventions.

Publications by leagues of municipalities should fulfill a twofold purpose. In the first place, they should keep alive during the interval between the conventions the feeling of co-operation and common interest among the members of the league; in the second place, they should contain some information of real value. The emphasis of all such publications should be laid on the local aspect of general problems, that is, on those

matters which interest the municipalities of the given state in particular. General publications, such as *The American City*, and the NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW, contain much information of value to all the cities, which need not be duplicated in the state publications; but discussions of the peculiar local problems and a comprehensive record of the activities of the various municipalities seem to justify at least a quarterly publication, if not a monthly journal. From the above indications of the character which in my opinion such publications should have, it will be seen that one publication for several state leagues (unless a number of small contiguous states face similar municipal conditions) or for all leagues in the United States, would not seem to be a crying necessity, nor fraught with much promise.

The third caption in the program for this discussion, viz., that of co-operation, opens up the most interesting problems of all. The various state organizations can undoubtedly be brought into co-operation through their permanent officers by a continual and sympathetic correspondence. National meetings of secretaries of such leagues would probably never bring together more than a very small proportion of such officers owing to the distances to be travelled, involving the expenditure of a very large amount of time and money, but within the state there are agencies with which these organizations of municipalities can very effectively co-operate. I refer particularly to bureaus of municipal research and reference. If they are located, as in my opinion they should be, in the state universities, the possibilities for co-operation are very manifest. The ideal arrangement would be to combine in one person the functions of permanent officer of the league and director of the municipal research and reference bureau. For, if the state league attempts to do any successful research or reference work, and if the research bureau, on the other hand, fulfills its obligations to the cities of the state in which it is located, they will inevitably cover the same ground at a considerable duplication of energy and money, and without the possibility of either agency rendering satisfactory service except with the continuing aid of the other organization. Common sense and economy, therefore, point not only to co-operation, but to identification of such instrumentalities of municipal improvement. Under such a plan as the one just suggested, the expense to the league of municipalities of keeping a permanent paid secretary would be either eliminated or greatly reduced, while the expenses of a bureau of municipal research and reference, so far as the activities in the state were concerned, could very well be borne in part by the municipalities which derive the primary benefit therefrom.

Such a bureau of municipal research and reference organized for these purposes can come to full fruition only when it contains on its staff real experts in all the various municipal activities represented in the cities of

the state. What a splendid opportunity this would afford to the smaller municipalities to engage at a relatively small expense really expert, disinterested advisors in place of private individuals, whose aim too often is not to serve the municipality by which they are employed but to derive the greatest pecuniary benefit for themselves.

THE CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN MAYORS ON "PUBLIC POLICIES AS TO MUNICIPAL UTILITIES"

BY CLYDE LYNDON KING¹

Philadelphia

THE conference of American mayors on public policies as to municipal utilities, held in Philadelphia, November 12-14, 1914, was distinguished by five important features: First, a balanced program which presented the relation of the city to its municipal utilities from practically every point of view; second, the wide attendance thereon by mayors, official delegates from cities, aldermen, public service commissioners and delegates from civic associations and universities; third, the prevalence of a sustained demand for reserving to each city full power to municipalize its public service institutions at will without undue legal, financial or constitutional handicap; fourth, the rising resentment in American cities against the state public service laws that have deprived the cities of adequate powers over their own most important services, and fifth, steps were taken toward the final establishment of the Utilities bureau through which cities may co-operate on utility matters.²

On the program were experts such as Delos F. Wilcox on fundamental planks in a public utility program; Louis D. Brandeis on interlocking directorates; Edward W. Bemis on some present-day issues in regulation; Frederic C. Howe on municipal ownership—the testimony of foreign experience, and M. N. Baker on public ownership and operation of water-works.

The corporation point of view was ably presented by Nathaniel T. Guernsey on the regulation of municipal utilities, Francis T. Homer on holding companies, Charles Day on a constructive policy for public service corporations and Clarke M. Rosecrantz on objections to public ownership and operation. Numerous and valuable were the contributions of city officials. Mayors Blankenburg, Harrison and Mitchel presided at the three sessions of Friday. Mayor Hocken, of Toronto,

¹ Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

² NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW, vol. iii, p. 751.