

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLICATIONS

I. BOOK REVIEWS

THE CITY MANAGER: A NEW PROFESSION.

By Harry Aubrey Toulmin, Jr. New York: D. Appleton & Company. National Municipal League Series. \$1.50.

Charter framers and students of municipal government will welcome Mr. Toulmin's book on the city manager because it fills a long felt want for a non-technical popular treatise on a subject which in a short time has grown to be of nation-wide interest, but upon which little has been written. While the book is a far cry from being exhaustive, still it does present in a simple and understandable style the facts and logic of those features of the city manager plan of government which receive most attention from both its advocates and its critics. Moreover, the author has appreciated the value of including proper accounting provisions in our new city charters and has rightly emphasized this often neglected feature by devoting a well illustrated chapter to "finance measures."

By the title, one might assume that the city manager as an individual and as the chief officer of the city was the only subject treated. The sub-title "A New Profession" tends to strengthen such an assumption. Happily, however, the subject matter is of far greater scope, starting in as it does with a short recount of the history of the straight commission plan and the development out of this, or the birth, of the city-manager plan, it takes up by organization unit and in logical order some charter provisions and discussions concerning (1) the electorate (2) the commission or council (3) the manager (4) the departments, and (5) departmental administration, and finishes with a summary of results and what different people think of the plan. It is not until the sixth chapter that the city manager himself is dealt with solely, and this chapter is

mostly composed of an enumeration of the powers given him in three different charters. Only two other chapters dwell upon the manager to any considerable extent, chapter seven, his means of administration through an efficient organization of departments, and chapter nine, his education and training.

Unfortunately, the author has been handicapped in getting out a timely book with only six months' operation of the Dayton plan before him. At the time of writing the book, fourteen cities were operating under the manager plan. At the time of writing this review, less than a year later, fifty-six cities and towns are operating with a manager and the number is increasing daily. Necessarily, the existing city manager charters as framed had to be called upon freely to yield a large proportion of material. The redeeming feature of this situation, however, has been cleverly supplied by the author's interesting presentation of charter sections which in their legal plumage would not ordinarily receive the attention they will command of the reader of Mr. Toulmin's book. A further redeeming feature is the argumentation and logic surrounding these sections, so arranged as to provoke deep seated thought from the reader.

A particularly impressive feature of the work is the author's sense of values that has enabled him to gather into one volume the meatiest of the material obtainable from such organizations as the National municipal league, the National short ballot organization, the Dayton bureau of municipal research, the Dayton citizens' committee and the Dayton city commission, bearing upon the city manager form of government—material which should be read simultaneously, but which seldom is, owing to the average man's inability to

know and advantageously use all these sources of information.

Several organization charts and a good bibliography are included.

C. O. DUSTIN.

Springfield, Mass.

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LOWER LIVING COSTS IN CITIES. A CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME FOR URBAN EFFICIENCY. By Clyde Lyndon King, Ph.D. New York: D. Appleton and Company. National Municipal League Series. \$1.50.

This is a valuable book, but its chief value lies in Part II on "Urban Food Costs." The rest of the book is devoted to general questions of municipal government, some of which seem rather remotely connected with the problem of the cost of living. The author's discussion of urban food costs is sane and very suggestive. One of the most valuable chapters, Chapter VII, is on the "Controllable elements in retail prices." Other chapters of special value are IV, "The cost of food distribution"; VI, "The middleman"; XI, "Standardization and efficient marketing through producers' co-operation." Chapter XIII on "A city program for lower food costs" seems to the reviewer a little disappointing, but is a good discussion of the possibilities of water-front markets and also of a city market bureau to plan and co-ordinate a system of distribution.

The reviewer does not wish to indulge in unreasonable criticism of a book which has so many valuable features, but he can hardly overlook the author's failure to take account of one of the largest economic factors in our American urban life, namely, the enormous use which is made of the telephone in marketing. Any comparison between American and European cities which fails to take into account the fact that two-thirds of all the telephones in the world are in the United States, and three-fourths of all of them are in the United States and Canada, is an incomplete com-

parison, though it has doubtless a certain hortatory value. It is easy to point out that much could be saved in the cost of food, through the use of central municipal markets, but until the American housewives give up the telephone habit, they are not going in large numbers to the central municipal market, or any other kind of a market that does not offer prompt or immediate delivery.

The author states (page 7) "The American city still thinks corner-grocery-wise of its food supply," but it is not conclusively shown that there is any cheaper method of giving the American housewife the kind of service she demands than the corner-grocery method. In fact, there is much to be said in favor of the proposition that the cheapest method of rendering good service is to have a large number of small depots, widely distributed, to which food supplies may be sent in large lots, say by the truck-load, and from which they can be promptly distributed to the households, in small or retail packages. It looks as though the problem of economic distribution of food products would have to be solved with the telephone as a factor, rather than without it. If this be true, the corner grocery may serve as the depot from which the housewife may secure, at a minimum cost, prompt delivery of food in small packages. Instead, therefore, of relegating the corner grocery to a past century, a fuller knowledge of the situation may convince us that the centralized retail market belongs to a backward civilization, antedating the wide use of the telephone, a state of affairs under which the housewife went to market with her basket and carried her purchases home. This may have been a means of saving money, but it was very wasteful of human energy. With the advance in prosperity and civilization, the tendency is more and more to save human energy, even though we spend a little more money in so doing. The energy which is saved may earn more than enough to pay the extra money cost.

T. N. CARVER.

Harvard University.