

THE OBSERVER

BRUCE DENNIS, Editor and Owner

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SHALL WE HAVE A COMMISSION CHARTER?

Affirmative.

(By the Charter Committee of La Grande.)

The committee of nine to whom was referred the task of preparing a charter for a Commission Form of Government for La Grande, after much labor and investigation, has prepared a charter, submitted it, and now under the initiative and referendum law, it comes before the people for adoption or rejection. The committee, taking up this important work is deeply appreciative of the labor of the committee of last year for the assistance its excellent work on a similar charter was to the present committee. The key notes are simplicity, directness and economy.

According to the last census nearly one-half (45%) of the people of the United States live in towns and cities of 2,500 inhabitants and over, and each succeeding census for many decades shows a rapidly increasing ratio. The problem of city government is one of the chief questions that confronts the country today. As the city is not a sovereignty, and strict division of such powers not necessary, the question arises—Why cannot a city government be conducted with the directness, economy and efficiency that a private business or corporation is? The object of city government is to secure to its inhabitants the greatest amount of good at the least amount of expense. An honest and sincere investigation of this question has led many cities to adopt what is known as the Commission Form of Government, turning over the city government to a commission to manage. They reasoned that form of government which rescued New Orleans from its deplorable condition in 1889 and 1890, when it could not pay the interest on its debt or raise money enough to meet its current expenses, and which placed Galveston on its feet in 1901, after it had been nearly destroyed and thousands of its people drowned by the great hurricane that overwhelmed the city with the waves of the gulf,

would be a good thing to correct the ordinary evils of city government—waste and inefficiency. In this there was no mistake, as the records of many cities show. Once tried this form remains, almost without exception, notwithstanding the efforts of grafters, ward heeler and chronic office seekers to create public sentiment against it. The good of the city is of more importance to the public than the prospect of some hanger-on fattening at the public crib; and the line of progress moves on. The wonderful change that has come over Portland in a few weeks' of commission rule, is a convincing argument of what it will do.

Among some of the excellent features the proposed charter for La Grande has, is the election of three commissioners by the city as a whole, thus eliminating the ward representative features, in which it is possible to elect a councilman or commissioner by a small minority of the vote. Under the proposed system, there is no opportunity to play off ward against ward, or combine one for political purposes with voters from another; and as, after the first year, there will be only one commissioner to elect from the whole city, the ward system would not be applicable. Another very great advantage is the field to get good material for commissioners would be wider, and the chance for any selfish or corrupt interest attempting to influence the electorate would be less. It would be far easier to influence and control a few hundred votes than two thousand. Our city should be a united whole, all working for a common benefit; and no good reason can exist why an artificial ward line should affect the right of any voter to select his representative—the best man available in the city—whose duty it is to represent the city as a whole, not a part, in the commissioners' meetings.

One of the important features of the proposed charter is that it embraces what is known as the City Manager Plan, which has been adopted in a number of our cities with great success, and places the management of the city's ministerial affairs in the hands of an expert, and makes it absolutely responsible party, upon whom can be fixed any mismanagement or neglect. The commission appoints a municipal judge and general manager. The general manager in turn appoints all the other officers of the city, has full and complete control over them and is responsible for their acts. He may be obtained from anywhere. Under this plan there can be no insubordination, as the general manager has the right to remove at any time any subordinate and cannot excuse himself by claiming that the commission directs him in the performance of his duties. The commission retains the same power over general manager, and in case of arbitrary or improper conduct may remove him at any time; thus in the city that swift and certain effectiveness possessed by private corporations. Nothing is worse in the government of a city than to have its officers mutually charging each other with neglect of official duty, and the taxpayers and citizens suffering therefrom. All contracts and claims will

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La Grande, Oregon

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have the expert examination of the general manager, and it is confidently believed that La Grande could have saved many thousands of dollars during the last few years, as well as enjoyed a wholesome and efficient government, if this system had been had.

An examination of the proposed charter will show that every detail of city contracts is provided so there can be no cause for misunderstanding and litigation, the laying out of government districts and the locating of such burdens is fully provided for leaving it to the people themselves to locate these questions. All contracts must be competitive.

The governmental voting renders it almost impossible for an unsuitable person to be elected by getting his opponent's vote divided. Each person has his first, second and third choices, and it is next to impossible for one to be elected unless he gets a majority of the total vote. There are many other excellent features the voter will find in this proposed charter which we cannot discuss for want of space. We do not claim it is perfect, but that it is equal to any tried in this section of the country, we confidently believe.

In conclusion the committee will say that it has done the best it could, has spent much time and labor in trying to get up a good charter along the lines of the best in the country. This committee as well as the former one has gladly done this entirely free of any compensation, and now asks the voters to carefully read it, and do what they think best. The committee has no personal end to attain, and to one of it expects to be an office seeker under the new charter, but for the great body of the people, do not care who holds the offices, so they are good and competent persons. Consider both sides, the interest of those who may oppose it, and of those who advocate it, then use your own judgment.

THE COMMITTEES.

EDUCATION IN GERMANY.

"The average man in the people in America is much more interested in the affairs of the public school than the average man in Germany," declares Dr. George Kerschensteiner, a well known German educator, in "A Comparison of Public Education in

Germany and the United States," issued by the Bureau of Education. "In the daily press, reports and discussions on educational topics occupy a space which to my observations is fully ten times that which German newspapers devote to the same subject."

Dr. Kerschensteiner compares point by point the school systems in the two countries. He shows how Germany secures educational efficiency by centralization of authority within the individual states. He admits that possibly centralization has gone even further than is desirable in Germany, but is equally positive that there is not enough centralization within the individual states of this country. As a result of the lack of state compulsion, he says, "We see today in the United States the sharpest contrasts between school systems that are irretrievably poor and others of the highest possible type that would do credit to the finest civilized nations of the globe." He finds that American citizens of a community have more direct control over their schools than in Germany and commends this condition.

Direct election of school board members by the citizens, as found in the United States, impressed Dr. Kerschensteiner very favorably. He notes that in Germany the citizens have little or nothing to say about their school system. "In Germany the local school boards are nowhere chosen by popular vote," he declares. He finds the American plan might be a very good thing for his own country particularly as a means of arousing genuine public interest in education.

The American high school homes in Dr. Kerschensteiner's opinion, are some interesting comment by the doctor, both complimentary and otherwise. He praises the high school's democratic spirit, its aim to educate all the people, but he misses the thoroughness that characterizes the work of the German gymnasium.

In both nations the schools are now in a period of great development, according to the Munich educator. "The great advantage that Germany possesses," he declares, "in addition to the relentless thoroughness of the whole educational work, is the well regulated organization of a state provided school system, which outlines in each community a school as good as that in every other community. But this advantage has been purchased at the expense of many qual-

PRIVATE WINS TROPHY.

King's Valued Prize Goes to Canadian Billionaire.

Hisley, England, July 25.—The King's prize in the Hisley rifle tournament was won by Private Hawkins of Canada. The trophy is a national rifle association gold medal and gold badge, and carries \$12.50 in cash.

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The Valley Creamery ice cream is not sold by retail at the creamery, but it can be bought in any quantity of the following named dealers:

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- Hill's Drug Store.
- Martin's Candy Store.
- S. E. Butler's Store.
- Lee's Grocery.
- Eberhard's Bakery.
- Douill's Bakery.
- Snowflake Bakery.
- Doolley's Billiard Parlor.

And of Mr. Harris, the man with the white wagon, the white horse and the white apron.

The Valley Creamery will be pleased to furnish their high grade ice cream to church and lodge societies, to hotels, boarding houses and to the general trade in quantities of one gallon or more.

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