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Times Want Ads Bring Results

Cities Under Commission Form of Government

THERE are 69 cities out of 195 in the United States having an estimated population of over 30,000 inhabitants each, which have already adopted a commission form of government, having discarded the former plan of being governed by a Mayor and Council. This information was made public by the annual report on financial statistics of cities having an estimated population of over 30,000, which will be issued soon by Director William J. Harris, of the Bureau of the Census Department of Commerce. This report covers the transactions of the calendar year 1912, or the fiscal year closing on dates prior to February 1, 1913. The bulletin was prepared under the supervision of Le Grand Powers, chief statistician for finance and municipal statistics.

The 69 cities which have adopted, or by legislative enactment have been placed under the commission form of government are as follows: Alabama—Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery. California—Berkeley, Oakland, Sacramento, San Diego and Pasadena. Colorado—Colorado Springs, Pueblo and Denver. District of Columbia—Washington. Illinois—Decatur and Springfield. Iowa—Cedar Rapids, Des Moines and Sioux City. Kansas—Kansas City, Topeka and Wichita. Kentucky—Newport, Covington and Lexington. Louisiana—New Orleans and Shreveport. Massachusetts—Haverhill, Lowell, Lynn and Salem. Minnesota—Duluth and St. Paul. Missouri—Joplin. Nebraska—Omaha and Lincoln. New Jersey—Atlantic City, Passaic, Trenton and Jersey City. Oklahoma—Muskogee and Oklahoma City. Oregon—Portland, La Grande. Pennsylvania—Allentown, Altoona, Chester, Erie, Harrisburg, Johnstown, Lancaster, McKeesport, New Castle, Reading, Wilkes-Barre, Williamsport and York. Tennessee—Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville and Memphis. Texas—Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Galveston and Houston. Utah—Salt Lake City. Washington—Spokane and Tacoma. West Virginia—Huntington. Wisconsin—Oshkosh and Superior. Cost of Commission Government. The cost per capita for the general expenses of all the municipal departments, and also the per capita net debt at the close of the year 1912, of these 69 cities which have adopted the commission form of government, respectively, are shown in the statement following. The term "net debt" as employed in the report is the funded and floating debt less sinking fund assets; and the term "general expenses" of the municipal department includes all costs of city government, except interest on debt and outlays for permanent improvements.

The first figure following the name of the city in the statement shows the per capita cost of municipal government for 1912 and the second figure the per capita net debt at the close of the year 1912. Alabama—Birmingham, \$8.64, \$38.55; Mobile, \$8.53, \$54.54; Montgomery, \$9.68, \$65.35. California—Berkeley, \$13.32, \$19.06; Oakland, \$14.82, \$36.68; Sacramento, \$18.94, \$26.07; San Diego, \$29.07, \$87.49; Pasadena, \$19.07, \$45.14. Colorado—Colorado Springs, \$16.94, \$73.48; Pueblo, \$10.94, \$57.27; Denver, \$20.13, \$33.82. District of Columbia—Washington, \$25.43, \$24.09. Illinois—Decatur, \$8.66, \$9.79; Springfield, \$12.29, \$20.82. Iowa—Cedar Rapids, \$11.88, \$32.62; Des Moines, \$14.30, \$30.09; Sioux City, \$10.57, \$21.38. Kansas—Kansas City, \$9.73, \$57.98; Topeka, \$11.58, \$36.72; Wichita, \$9.61, \$40.17. Kentucky—Newport, \$7.88, \$38.86; Covington, \$9.88, \$41.51; Lexington, \$11.46, \$24.78. Louisiana—New Orleans, \$12.79, \$123.81; Shreveport, \$11.06, \$19.98. Massachusetts—Haverhill, \$13.93, \$37.66; Lowell, \$13.10, \$24.22; Lynn, \$13.65, \$36.32; Salem, \$13.09, \$27.12. Minnesota—Duluth, \$13.95, \$78.29; St. Paul, \$13.01, \$43.19. Missouri—Joplin, \$7.96, \$10.25. Nebraska—Omaha, \$16.36, \$109.23; Lincoln, \$10.79, \$25.98. New Jersey—Atlantic City, \$22.76, \$116.10; Passaic, \$10.07, \$28.40; Trenton, \$11.53, \$22.09; Jersey City, \$13.90, \$72.80. Oklahoma—Muskogee, \$11.02, \$65.65; Oklahoma City, \$10.40, \$66.24. Oregon—Portland, \$13.10, \$48.68. Pennsylvania—Allentown, \$6.47, \$17.11; Altoona, \$8.07, \$39.25; Chester, \$7.48, \$39.75; Erie, \$8.85, \$9.01; Harrisburg, \$10.24, \$37.64; Johnston, \$7.17, \$8.93; Lancaster, \$7.61, \$29.04; McKeesport, \$10.91, \$21.89; New Castle, \$9.16, \$14.94; Reading, \$8.22, \$15.27; Wilkes-Barre, \$9.22, \$23.16; Williamsport, \$8.57, \$12.15; York, \$6.58, \$19.78. Tennessee—Chattanooga, \$11.58, \$66.82; Knoxville, \$10.31, \$83.51; Nashville, \$10.92, \$50.02; Memphis, \$12.95, \$75.33. Texas—Austin, \$9.14, \$75.56; Dallas, \$11.11, \$36.22; El Paso, \$11.60, \$54.65; Fort Worth, \$8.91, \$59.25; Galveston, \$11.63, \$113.24; Houston, \$11.95, \$73.95. Utah—Salt Lake City, \$14.48, \$57.61. Washington—Spokane, \$14.67, \$65.56; Tacoma, \$14.16, \$105.96. West Virginia—Huntington, \$6.97, \$23.02. Wisconsin—Oshkosh, \$9.49, \$14.32; Superior, \$12.65, \$23.11. The corresponding average figures for the entire 195 cities included in this report are, respectively, \$17.34, \$68.74.

In referring to cities with governments of the type which prevails in the average American city prior to the year 1900, the report uses the generic designation "Cities governed by Mayor and Council," in like manner, in referring to cities whose governments are such as in the last decade have come to be spoken of as "Commission form" or "Manager plan," the cities are described as "Cities governed by Commission" or "Cities governed by the manager plan." Cities governed by commissions or those under the "City manager plan" may have city "Commissions" and cities of the first class generally give to the chief or Mayor the title of "Mayor." The term "Commission form of government" refers to the government of cities administered by a small number of officials exercising both legislative and executive authority. This system of government has been given many distinctive forms of individual cities, and these forms are frequently spoken of by such designations as the "Galveston plan" or the "Des Moines plan," according as they approximate the form of government in operation in the one or the other of the two cities mentioned.

Washington Led Off. Washington, D. C., was the first city in the United States to be governed for any number of years by a commission, coming under that form of government by the terms of an act of Congress that became effective June 11, 1878. The application of this form of government to the capital of the United States grew out of the relation to the National Government to this particular city, and the city of Washington was not considered as an example to other municipalities with reference to its form of government. The great need of improvements in sanitary conditions of Memphis, Tenn., following a severe visitation of yellow fever in 1878, combined with the fact that at the time the city had incurred an indebtedness equal to its authority for borrowing money, led the Legislature of Tennessee in 1879 to put an end to the existence of the city as a municipal corporation and to create in its stead a taxing district whose affairs were conducted by a small body of officers having practically the authority of the commissioners in the city under the new or commission form of government. After the recovery of the city from the difficulties which made this form of government necessary, Memphis was reincorporated as a city, with its earlier form of government, and its experience was not deemed such as to encourage substitution of this form of government for that of Mayor and Council.

A destructive storm having overwhelmed Galveston, Texas, on September 1, 1900, and left the city prostrate financially, as Memphis had been in 1878, Galveston was placed under a government by a commission in 1901. The experience of Galveston under this form of government was such that in 1905 it was adopted by Houston, Texas. Two other cities, having 30,000 inhabitants, adopted it in 1907, two in 1908, eight in 1909, six in 1910, 15 in 1911, nine in 1912, 21 in 1913, and three in 1914.

The City Manager Plan. An act of the Ohio Legislature, approved May 6, 1913, provided for a form of municipal government to be known as the "City manager plan." The Council to consist of five members in cities of less than 10,000 inhabitants, of seven members in cities of from 10,000 to 25,000 inhabitants, the Council being elected in all cases for a term of four years. This Council is to constitute a governing body with power to pass ordinances, adopt regulations, appoint a chief administration officer to be known as the "City Manager," fix his salary, approve all appointments made by him (except as otherwise provided), and appoint a civil service commission and all boards or commissions created by ordinances. So far as information has been received by the Bureau of the Census, the only city of over 30,000 inhabitants organized under the

"City Manager plan" in Dayton, Ohio. Some of the smaller cities of that state have adopted this plan and some of the smaller cities of other states have adopted a plan somewhat similar, one or two having adopted it prior to the enactment of the given statute.

GALVESTON SAVED BY COMMISSION GOVERNMENT

THREE hundred American cities have swept away boards of aldermen, councilmen, mayors, and a host of minor officials and have set up a new municipal government on a plan so simple that it needs no boss to direct it and the people in these towns not only secured full control over their governments, but have kept it, election after election. While scores of American cities have their groups of men who are enthusiastically organizing some endeavor to secure commission form of government under the managerial system for their own town, why does not Marshfield take steps toward municipal enlightenment. Goodness knows we need it—we need anything that will make for greater efficiency and economy in the administration of municipal affairs.

The spread of the commission government movement began by accident. Galveston, Texas, after the flood of 1900, was practically wiped out. So much progressive and constructive work was demanded that the old system of a board of aldermen and the usual string of independent elective offices broke down. A group of business men petitioned the state governor to suspend the local government and replace it with a commission of five men. This was done and the whole city placed under the control of five men, three of whom the governor appointed. This was how the term "commission" originated, and the name, for want of better description, has stuck to it ever since, although the governing board is no longer a "commission" in the true sense of the word at all.

The commission in Galveston was able to make decisions and get things accomplished in half the time it took the old board of aldermen to get a resolution referred to a committee. The commission planned and built a seawall to protect the city against further storms, raised the ground level of a large part of the town, got the city government running again at one-third less annual cost, made a number of important improvements and at the same time reduced the debt and the tax rate.

After two years the commission was made elective by popular vote. This was the beginning. Galveston's claim that it was the best governed city in the United States made Houston jealous and after a few years this city petitioned for a similar government and was granted it. Other Texas cities followed and the system rapidly spread to large cities in other states. The most important variation from the original type of commission government is the so-called "city-manager" plan. Under this system the elected commissioners are simply a board of directors; they do not, individually or collectively, concern themselves with departmental detail, as in the case of the old form. That function they leave to an appointive chief executive who is known as the city manager. The official is expected to be an expert and need not be a resident of the city at the time of his appointment. Under the city-manager plan, the council, or directing board, is truly more representative than under the original commission government system; first, because it is not necessary for its members to neglect their private affairs in the running of the city, and second, because it will make it possible for men to become members of the council who would make excellent representatives but poor managers.

This is the plan of government so successfully and profitably in operation in Dayton, Ohio, Sumter, S. C., Springfield, Ohio, Hickory and Morgantown, N. C., La Grande, Ore., and Phoenix, Ariz. Why not add Marshfield to the list? FOREST NOTES. It is estimated that the government's Grand Canyon game refuge in Arizona now contains about ten thousand deer. More than nine million young trees and ten thousand pounds of seed were planted on the national forests in 1914. The government built more than two thousand miles of trail and three thousand miles of telephone line on the national forests in 1914. At least 25 per cent of the larch timber over large areas in eastern Oregon has been killed or weakened by mistletoe, and the forest service is taking steps to combat the pest. Success has followed forest planting on the sand hills of Nebraska. Jack pines planted there by the government forest service ten years ago now have a height of over 15 feet and a diameter of 4 inches.

Have your LETTER heads, bill heads, etc., printed at THE TIMES office.

SENATOR WOULD DIVIDE TEXAS

BILL Proposes to Call One of Them Jefferson.

AUSTIN, Tex., Feb. 13.—If a joint resolution which Senator W. A. Johnson introduced in the legislature is passed and the proposal is supported by a majority of the voters of the people of Texas, a new state to be called Jefferson will be created out of the western half of the present commonwealth.

Mr. Johnson says that the one million people who reside in the territory embraced in the proposed new state are in open revolt against the bad treatment which they have been receiving at the hands of the dominating liquor interests, which he charges are in control of the political affairs of Texas.

Under the act by which Texas was admitted to the Union the commonwealth can be divided into as many as five states without any action on the part of Congress. Texas is big enough to make five states, each larger than New York.

OREGON INDUSTRIAL REVIEW

Camps are being established and men are employed on the new Salem-Stayton railroad.

The Oregon Power Company is installing a new lighting system for Monmouth.

Polk, Yamhill and Tillamook offer to put in \$45,000 on the Grand Ronde road to Tillamook if the State Highway Commission puts up an equal sum.

More split-log drags and less splitting profits with road contractors will make better roads.

The St. Helens quarry has a contract for 80,000 Belgian blocks.

A St. Helens shipbuilder will build a new mill for the government snagboat Mathlam.

At Springfield the S. P. Company is macadamizing Seventh street to the depot.

The St. Johns Evangelical Lutheran church is to be built at a cost of \$6000.

The Springfield Planing Mills will establish a box and furniture factory.

The Independence fruit growers are organizing a cannery.

Eugene people are looking after a lace factory proposition.

Dallas may issue bonds to buy the waterworks.

At Albany resolutions were adopted to raise \$25,000 for a cannery.

The Drain co-operative cannery closes a successful year.

At Klamath Falls an electric line to Eureka is being promoted.

Frazier & Son of Eugene have established the manufacture of fire hydrants.

The Rogue River Public Service Corporation is building a power dam at Ament.

At Newberg the cannery business for 1914 totalled \$53,305.

A state fish hatchery is to be located on Clear Creek near Forest Grove.

The Umatilla county court is moving for a \$25,000 county library.

At Gresham a \$25,000 union high school will be erected on a 4 acre tract.

Dallas may get the unemployed Great Western sawmill near Black Rock.

The Portland East Side Business Men's Club will erect a two-story building.

At North Plains the Haukenbeck mill and planer have been leased and will be operated.

The Springfield Creamery Co. will erect a \$5000 concrete building and refrigerating plant.

The Eugene water board will call for bids on \$25,000 reservoirs on Colgate Creek.

HORSE RADISH

Man tries his best to come across with some delicious, pungent sauce, which will add zest to things we eat, to all the divers kinds of meat. The plutocrats spend many dimes for sauces brought from foreign climes, the formulas of which I'm told, are guarded carefully as gold. Ten thousand chefs still strive and strain, and torture what they have of brain, some fine new condiment to spring, that would bring plaudits from a king. Dame Nature gives that noble fruit, the excellent horse radish root, which grated when it's strong and fresh, while all its vim is in its flesh, and with some vinegar then stirred, makes all your sauces seem absurd. I buy a bottle for a dime and have a condiment sublime. I draw the cork, there rushes out a fine aroma, strong and stout, that fairly lifts me from my feet, and makes me strange and repeat. Horse radish on a slice of beef? It makes a man forget his grief and stirs his sluggish appetite until he longs to eat all night. There's nothing else that's half as good; though all inventors living should for centuries their skill employ, to make a sauce that is a joy, exhausting every art and shift, they'd never beat Dame Nature's gift.—Walt Mason.

K. P. NOTICE. On Monday evening, February 15 Myrtle Lodge No. 3, Knights of Pythias, will hold a banquet in their hall on Front street to celebrate the fifty-first anniversary of the order. All members of the order are invited to be present. Signed C. A. MOORE, C.C.

Have you tried The Times' want ads?