

CITY MANAGERS LOOK TO FUTURE DIRECTING MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

By H. S. Gilbertson.

(This is the 10th of 14 articles on the city manager plan by H. S. Gilbertson of the National Municipal League.)

What American cities have needed as much as anything else was to put themselves in the way of thinking ahead. So long as the city remained under political influences, its guardians thought forward just so far as the next election, and no further. There was little hope that a policy well begun today might not be torn down tomorrow.

Reform waves were good while they lasted, as in New York, under Mitchell; but, just as sure as night follows day, along would come Tammany, or something like it, and bring back the politicians.

The city manager plan, on the other hand, has been giving continuous policy and administration through elections after elections, primarily because the executive is in a position to think municipally rather than politically. His future lies in the general municipal field and if one town does not like him, he can move on.

Councils may change with the recurring elections—though they usually don't—but the new administration finds that it can best meet its own great responsibilities by retaining the executive who is on the job and knows the ropes.

That is why there has been much thinking ahead in these 150 manager cities. They think ahead in terms of public works. For example, the city of Jackson, Mich., has planned a sewer and a water system which takes in the probable needs of the city for the next 50 years.

Dayton is another city that knows how much sewage it will probably have to dispose of in 1950, and its trunk sewers are planned accordingly.

Its paving extensions follow not the piecemeal importunities of quarrelsome abutting property owners, but a broad plan that looks far ahead to a vastly increased population.

Zoning is a subject that interests the city managers because it enables them to see ahead. At Niagara Falls, for example, the zoning ordinance indicates certain blocks as those in which heavy manufacturing is permitted, other areas are open to business, others reserved to residential use.

Hitherto, rich men have often protected their handsome residential streets by mutual covenants and restrictions against use of the land for factories, garages, or shops, but the poorer citizens who put his savings into a little bungalow could never be sure that the next lot might not be used for a malodorous stable, a noisy public garage or an ugly, billboarded store damaging his investment.

Zoning prevents all that and gives the city manager the basis for plan-

ning. He runs big water pipes, big sewers for factory waste and heavy-hauling pavements into the heavy manufacturing areas and does not cut the land into small blocks.

He builds light traffic pavements and ornamental street lamps in the residential areas, while the business and shopping streets receive still another treatment appropriate to their needs.

Wichita has stopped procrastinating about flood prevention and Dayton is no longer in terror of the Miami river.

When the war began inflating costs, the Dayton management foresaw the rise in steel and, knowing that certain bridges would have to be built sooner or later, bought the steel at \$27 a ton. When the bridges were built, the market had gone up to \$69.

This piece of foresight saved \$35,000 to the municipality. Similar things were done with 58,000 barrels of cement and 6000 tons of water pipe.

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