

CITY CHARTERS AND TAXATION.

Problems the Next Legislature Must Solve.

In view of the fact that a movement is on foot to revise Sumpter's charter, the following, from a state exchange, will be read with interest:

There are three ways for a city to secure a charter. The first is by the legislature. Each city has a different charter, changed each term of the legislature. In states under this system the greater part of a session of the legislature is taken up by fixing charters.

Constant alterations are being made, and when the time consumed in attending to these is deducted from the length of the session, it will be seen that these ticklish matters have used up a great deal of valuable time to no particular advantage. Cities want many things, and this opens a way for contractors and politicians to work schemes through the legislature for their own ends.

One of the greatest evils under this system is that the charter is made by people who do not know the conditions existing in a certain city. The legislature fixes the salaries, orders water works constructed, or something similar, creating enormous obligations for a city to shoulder, without inquiring whether or not the city is able to pay. This is the most deplorable system and Oregon classes up with the worst. Portland is subjected to this form and all its evil consequences.

The second method is to have a charter prepared by a legislature and then submitted to the people of the city for adoption.

The third method is known as home rule in cities, and is in vogue in three states. There is a provision by which, under certain laws, cities of a certain size can form their own charter. This is an ideal method.

There are states where special acts for cities are prohibited by the legislature, the people alone having the power to say what they shall do. Some states have certain laws for cities, the cities being classified, and a general act covers all the cities in a particular class.

Before Portland can have home rule a constitutional amendment is necessary, and a commission would have to be appointed, or rather elected. The commission would draft the charter and make the people thoroughly familiar with every detail of municipal government before the charter was adopted. There are many obstacles in the way of attaining such a state, and one of the worst is the amount of time that would be required to elapse before the constitutional amendment was attended to.

As it is in Oregon, where charters are subject to change entire or are amended in particular points at every session, it is impossible to attain a form of government favorable to the people. If a provision is good there would not be time to test it thoroughly, because before its advantages could be ascertained another session of the legislature arrives and a new charter is sprung. We have no settled policy for government.

When the amendments are being made at Salem next January, an important discussion will come up over street improvements. Data is being gathered for the purpose of changing the provision of the existing charter on the topic. The impression prevailing is that there is room for innovations.

CHANGES IN STATE LAWS.

Recommended by County Judges and Assessors.

At the recent meeting of the county judges and assessors of this state, held in

Portland, the following resolutions, suggesting changes in the laws, were adopted:

"We recommend that all real property be assessed by description or number, or by legal subdivisions, or by metes and bounds, or lots or blocks, as the case might require, rather than to the name of the owner or supposed owner, and that the valuation be placed on the same only every two years; and that the improvements on all real property be considered as part of the same.

"When errors occur in any description of real property, the sheriff of tax collector shall have the power to correct the same, when satisfied of such error.

"We would further recommend that the form of the assessment roll be made in such a manner that it may be used for the tax collector's roll and for the delinquent tax sale, and that town and city lots be put in separate books.

"We also recommend that the first Monday in January of each year be fixed as the date of valuations, to be placed on all property.

"We recommend that assessors be elected for a term of four years.

"We recommend that a committee of five be appointed to draft and prepare suitable assessment blanks to carry these recommendations into effect, and that this committee be authorized to employ legal service, the county courts of the several counties to pay for the same.

"That the treasurer shall be collector of taxes up to the time they become delinquent; that the sheriff shall collect the delinquent taxes.

"That if the present law is not adequate, it should be made so that levy for advertising on real property for sale of same for delinquent taxes should not be made necessary.

"That all taxes should become due and payable November 1, annually, and become delinquent on January 1, following, and that a penalty of 1 per cent be then added, with legal interest on same, after becoming delinquent.

"A state board of equalization, consisting of seven members, to be appointed by the governor or elected by the voters. The state to be divided into seven districts, based on population."

DEEP WELL AT THE DALLES.

Plenty of Water But Does Not Rise to the Surface.

After boring through hard basalt rock at The Dalles since last May and reaching a depth of 504 feet, operations have been suspended by the board of water commissioners on the artesian well back of the city reservoir, which was being sunk to ascertain whether or not flowing water could be obtained so that it could be utilized and conveyed into the reservoir.

Extremely hard basalt rock was encountered from almost the first and continued the whole distance, and the experience has settled the question as to whether or not artesian water can be obtained in that locality. It was shown that there is any quantity of water at the place where the well was sunk. A large stratum was reached at a depth of 105 feet, and the water immediately rose to within 70 feet of the surface. Three other large streams were reached before the 500 feet were gone through, but each time the surface of the water lowered, the upper stratum of water flowing away with lower stratum each time one was reached, showing that the downward pressure of the long column of water, as the depth increased, overcame the upward pressure of the water below.

The commission is well satisfied with the experiment, as there was considerable doubt as to whether flowing water could be obtained. The well has cost in the neighborhood of \$2,000, an amount incomparable with the benefit which would be derived had a stream of good flowing water been obtained. The hole is cased and will be carefully plugged and preserved for any future experiments.—Exchange.

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