

PACIFIC NORTHWEST MUNICIPALITIES¹

IN ORDER to meet the ever increasing problems of modern city life, it has become necessary to unite municipalities of particular sections of the country into leagues, the purpose of which is the promotion of better and more efficient government through the establishment of reference libraries, bureaus of information and the exchange of ideas and experiences of city officials and public minded citizens. For a dozen or more years such organizations have existed in practically all portions of the United States. The leagues of New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, California, and the leagues of midland municipalities, embracing the cities of Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska are perhaps the best known.

The Commercial Club of Walla Walla, Washington, recognizing the need for united action among the cities of the Pacific Northwest, agreed to finance the organization of a league composed of the cities of Oregon,

¹ This account of the Walla Walla meeting of the League of Pacific Northwest Municipalities is so significant that the NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW is departing from its usual policy in regard to reporting such events. The meeting was not only an interesting one in itself but was significant of the need of the growing cities of the Pacific Northwest for more effective coöperation. Individually they are making great progress but they feel that the experience of each should be at the disposal of all and that they can make the most substantial and satisfactory progress by working together. In this connection attention is called to the suggestion of Dr. Clyde L. King in his report of the meetings of sundry state leagues to the effect that the National Municipal League and the NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW should be the means of bringing these various organizations into closer coöperation with each other, a suggestion which is emphasized by the action of the Union of Canadian Municipalities in taking the initial steps for the formation of an international municipal league and asking the National Municipal League not only to participate therein but to designate its secretary as secretary of the proposed international municipal league.

At the Los Angeles meeting of the National Municipal League the council at the suggestion of Prof. Edward M. Sait of Columbia University, authorized the appointment of a special committee on state leagues, which committee is now engaged in carrying out this work. In the prosecution of its work this committee has sent to the various state leagues the following letter of inquiry:

The National Municipal League, being desirous of getting into closer touch with the state leagues of municipalities, appointed at its Los Angeles meeting a special committee to promote this end. This committee consists of Richard S. Childs of New York, Dr. Edward M. Sait of Columbia University and Charles G. Haines. I am requested by this committee to ask you to send me the following information concerning your organization: (1) date of organization, (2), objects, (3) members, (4) membership dues, (5) publications, (6) sketch of typical year's work of the association.

In return for your courtesy we shall be glad to supply you with the reports of this committee and their recommendations when published.

H. A. Mason, the secretary of the California League of Municipalities, prepared an admirable paper on the work of the organization, which appeared in the October issue of the NATIONAL MUNICIPAL REVIEW, and has been published as a separate reprint. We shall be glad to send you additional copies of this, if you desire them.

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Washington and Idaho. Accordingly, a committee was appointed, which included the mayor of Walla Walla, members of the club, and representatives from the faculty of Whitman College, Dr. S. B. L. Penrose, president of the college, being made chairman. This committee effected a temporary organization, appointed officers from among the most prominent citizens and municipal officials of the three states, and prepared a draft of a constitution. The officers thus appointed, with the coöperation of a committee of the Walla Walla Commercial Club, arranged for a conference, prepared a program, and issued invitations to all the cities, commercial and civic clubs, and interested citizens of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The result of their efforts was a gathering of sixty delegates in the city of Walla Walla on October 24 and 25, 1912. About twenty of the leading cities of the Northwest were represented.

The conference heartily ratified the action of the temporary organization, adopted a permanent constitution, reelected all of the temporary officers, and approved the "League of Pacific Northwest Municipalities" as the official name of the organization.

The very evident interest and enthusiasm of the delegates in the spirited discussions after each of the papers indicated that the subjects discussed were of vital interest to the municipalities of the three states.

J. E. Frost, former state tax commissioner, one of the best informed men in the Northwest, characterized the Washington system of taxation as primitive and unenlightened because the state ignores the first great principle of equal taxation—that the individual should be compelled to contribute to the government in proportion to his ability.

The state of Washington [he continued] is the only state in the union and to the best of my knowledge, the only civilized community in the world that grants exemption to predatory wealth and imposes the entire burden of taxation upon simple forms of property: upon the home, the farm, the merchant, the manufacturer. A tax is an evil which drives away or prevents a desirable thing from coming to you. A tax is a good tax which encourages home building and home production. Imposition of taxes on the whole of industry and the immediate fruits of labor prevents the proper utilization of the great resources in the state and drives industries away. We need more homes, more farms, more factories, more opportunities for the employment of labor and a larger home market.

In concluding Mr. Frost declared that the first advance step for the state must be a constitutional amendment to free legislators from the restriction which binds them to an equal property tax, imposed on visible, tangible property, at an equal and uniform rate regardless of its character, condition or tax paying ability.

One of the features of the program was a lecture on city planning by E. F. Lawrence, a well known architect of Portland. At the opening of his address Mr. Lawrence declared,

The American city today, with few exceptions, is neither beautiful nor practicable. The American city has been hampered and stunted in its growth by real estate speculation carried on only for the day without regard to the future welfare of the community. The inborn belief of the American people that the rights of the individual are supreme over great community interests has saddled our municipalities with almost insurmountable charter limitations and obstructions.

C. M. Fassett, commissioner of public utilities for the city of Spokane argued for the municipal ownership and control of public utilities. He noted the dangers and difficulties attending such control by the officials of our cities. He maintained that,

An expensive and thorough propaganda is being carried on by wealthy and powerful corporations which see their displacement and loss of profit in public ownership. Ex parte news accounts, distorted facts and false conclusions are sent out all over the land, and have their effect; and there is enough truthful news, caused by the action of the political influences to which I have referred, detrimental to public ownership to frighten timid voters into a refusal to allow it to be undertaken. But the day is surely coming when we shall be free to inaugurate with assurance of success, any collective undertaking which may add to our efficiency, comfort, and happiness.

The discussion of health and sanitation proved to be one of the most profitable subjects of the program. Dr. Tetreau told how through a vigorous health campaign in the city of North Yakima an annual scourge of typhoid fever was entirely eliminated. As a result of a health campaign conducted in a business like way a death rate of 252 in 1910 and 210 in 1911 was reduced to 108 in 1912, notwithstanding a marked increase in population.

Dr. J. E. Crichton, commissioner of health of Seattle, spoke on health as an asset. He maintained

If physical well being is an asset, and we all recognize it as such, then that city will be the richest which best controls sickness and disease in order that the people may have the greatest number of efficient days in which they may labor and strive. That city is the richest which renders the social conditions of the people most pleasant and agreeable, that throws about them reasonable legal protection and restraint, because all these things conserve health and well being.

Any community can reasonably protect itself from communicable disease, like scarlet fever and diphtheria, and there is no reasonable excuse why these diseases are allowed to multiply and exact their toll if proper preventive measures are applied. This much, however, cannot be said of tuberculosis since the necessary machinery of government has not as yet been so perfected that health officers have the proper authority.

On the subject new legislation to be desired, Mayor W. W. Seymour of Tacoma offered a series of recommendations which he hoped would be

considered and presented to the legislatures of the various states interested in the league. Among the recommendations were the following:

1. A conservative home rule for cities.
2. A law which would make effectual the regulation of the social evil.
3. A more effective state food and drug act.
4. A state law permitting excess condemnation in cities of the first class.
5. A law requiring the state board of health to pass upon the domestic water supply of cities and villages before construction of the water plants.
6. A law establishing a reformatory similar to that at Monroe for men.
7. A law creating a court of domestic relations.

Under home rule for cities are to be considered: a law permitting cities to sell gas, water, and light to people residing beyond their incorporated limits; the exclusion from the debt limit of all debts incurred for municipally owned utilities which bring in a sufficient revenue; a law to give cities of the first and second class a more liberal investment of their sinking funds; a law giving cities wider latitude in the matter of industrial development; a law that will provide for the reduction of penalties on delinquent payments of local improvement district assessment; a law permitting cities of the first and second classes to assist various charitable and philanthropic institutions by appropriations of money.

The California league, through Mr. Locke, offered the Pacific Northwest League the use of its publication, *Pacific Municipalities*. The offer was accepted and an arrangement effected whereby the secretary of the latter league became an associate editor of the magazine and this monthly was temporarily made the official organ of the Pacific Northwest League. It was also proposed by Mr. Locke that beginning in 1915 the League of California Municipalities and the League of Pacific Northwest Municipalities have triennial joint meetings, thus affiliating more closely the cities of the Pacific Coast.

The conference was the first meeting of this character ever held in the Northwest. The delegates present voted that an annual conference should be held, and that a reference library and bureau of information be established at the headquarters of the league and adopted a by-law, providing for a legislative committee of fifteen members, five from each state to constitute a sub-committee for that state. The officers who were reelected and into whose hands the promotion of the organization for another year is placed are: President, Ex-governor Miles C. Moore, Walla Walla; vice-presidents, Geo. F. Cotterill, mayor of Seattle; A. G. Rushlight, mayor of Portland; Arthur Hodges, mayor of Boise; treasurer, R. Insinger, president of chamber of commerce, Spokane; secretary, Charles G. Haines, Ph.D., professor of political science, Whitman College; executive committee, Miles C. Moore, president; James H. Brady, Pocatello, Idaho; A. J. Gillis, Walla Walla, Wash.; Theodore B. Wilcox, Portland, Ore.; Charles G. Haines, secretary.

Arrangements are under way to publish the proceedings of the conference and the important addresses will also appear in current issues of *Pacific Municipalities*. A vigorous campaign for membership has been begun. The success of the first conference, the unanimous approval of the plan to hold such a conference annually, and the very evident interest already manifested in the League assures a promising future for the new organization.

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