

because an enlightened despotism is ruling in Germany, behold Germany beats all the other nations in industry; that this same enlightened despotism has by *Protection*, flooded the free market of England with "things made in Germany." And if one ask about the German wage earners, one is told that they are *all right*, far more prosperous on the whole, than are the English of that class. And the navy of that country is growing, and its enlightened despotism is needing more land. Therefore, that England may not be ruined, she must increase her tariff, strengthen her navy, and let Baden Powell drill the babies so they will grow up able to kill scientifically and with subtlety. Let us cast no slur upon those who hold these ideas. They may be better individuals than we are and quite as sincere, though they have got gummed up in details before examining the roots of the situation. But the dreadful Berlin incident, taken into consideration with like incidents of the year, indicates that there are people in Germany opposed to this benevolent despotism. If these Berlin crowds, understanding discipline as we of the West do not begin to, hazard destruction by the police, the Goddess of Discontent must be urging them on toward greater freedom. Not even under the military discipline of Germany, can the doctrine that government should be by the consent of the governed, be changed to government for the benefit of the governed, without disappointment and protest. Here seems to be the beginning of the end of one of the strongest arguments in behalf of protection, with which so many British people have been dazed.

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THE DES MOINES PLAN IN OPERATION.*

The Commission form of municipal government obliterates ward lines, ignores party politics, and abolishes legislative, executive and judicial distinctions.

It substitutes a board consisting of the Mayor and four Commissioners, who manage the affairs of the city as a board of directors would manage the business of a bank or of any other large corporation. They are invested with all the powers of city government, and are elected by the people of the whole city.

These five men divide the duties of the city government among themselves into five departments: Public Affairs, Accounts and Finances, Public

*This editorial is by the Mayor of Des Moines, Iowa, whose functions under the Des Moines plan of Commission Government are those of Superintendent of the Department of Public Affairs.

Safety, Streets and Public Improvements, and Parks and Public Property. They then elect all the subordinate officers necessary for the city business, such as Chief of Police, Police Judge, City Clerk, City Engineer, City Treasurer, City Auditor, etc. These subordinate officers may be discharged at any time. All other subordinates, except common laborers, are selected under civil service rules administered by a Civil Service Commission, and are removable only for misconduct, or lack of attention to duties, or activity in political matters.

The four Commissioners and the Mayor act as the administrative heads of their respective departments. They also constitute the Council and as such legislate for the city.

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These five Councilmen under the Des Moines Plan are elected for a period of two years, and in the following manner: Any citizen who secures the signatures of twenty-five voters vouching for his character may become a candidate for Mayor or Commissioner. The two candidates receiving the highest number of votes for Mayor at the primary are the candidates for Mayor at the election; the eight receiving the highest number of votes for Commissioner are the final candidates for Commissioners. At the election, which occurs two weeks later, the candidate for Mayor who receives the highest number of votes becomes Mayor, and the four candidates for Commissioner who receive the highest number of votes become Commissioners.

At their first meeting, those five elect the subordinate city officers, and the new Council is then ready to conduct the business of the city.

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It will be seen that directness and simplicity are the main characteristics of the Des Moines plan of Commission government.

The great purposes are to make the city officials feel responsive to public opinion, and to enable them to make themselves efficient in administration.

To carry out those two fundamental ideas, two other great principles have dictated nearly all the details of the charter—namely: to confer upon the governing body great power, and to hold it strictly responsible for right uses of its power. *Publicity* and *efficiency* are the watchwords of the Des Moines plan.

Candidates must make a public statement of their campaign expenses; there can be no secret meetings of the City Council; every ordinance

appropriating money must be on public file for seven days before it becomes effective; all franchises must be submitted to a vote of the people for approval before they become operative; and officers must be under no secret obligations to public service companies in the way of passes, special rates, or free services.

These specific provisions for publicity have created a general spirit that demands the bringing of everything in connection with the city government out into the open. Campaigns are conducted practically altogether in open meetings, hundreds of which occur in every city election; and every meeting of the City Council is minutely reported in the daily newspapers. The result is that public opinion, well informed and intelligent, moulds the action of the City Council.

The power of this public opinion is rendered still more effective by provisions for an essential part of the Des Moines plan—the Initiative, the Referendum, and the Recall.

Having thus provided for intelligent, active and effective public opinion, making the city government responsible to the people for its every act, the next thing of importance, indeed the great object, is to give it the means of efficient administration. It is therefore invested with every power incident to city government—legislative, executive and judicial—so that there can be no excuse for inefficiency.

Prompt, efficient, business-like administration of municipal affairs is the natural result. When you have intelligent public opinion stimulating a business-like administration of common affairs, isn't that something like the fulfillment of the prophecy of democracy?

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Now, how does this novelty in municipal government work out in practice?

It has been tried in Des Moines only a little more than two years, and circumstances during that time have hampered the new form of government more or less. Yet it has undoubtedly been a great improvement—indeed, an almost incalculable improvement—upon the old form.

The administration has been prompter, and the city has been cleaned up physically and morally far beyond the old order. Permanent improvements have been secured to an extent not even approached in the past. And all has been done upon a tax levy ranging from .8 mill to 4.2 mills less than during the eight preceding years. To be exact, the levy during the two years of the Des Moines plan has averaged 2.7 mills less than it

averaged under the old plan during the eight years preceding.

To be sure, there has been a great civic awakening in Des Moines, and to this some observers may ascribe the improvements, upon the theory that "a new broom sweeps clean." But the fact is that one of the chief merits of the Des Moines plan is its effect in fixing popular attention upon public affairs, and thereby tending to arouse and sustain popular civic interest.

Under the new plan, the average citizen of Des Moines takes personal pride in his city government. Under the old plan, it was customary to criticise, or to speak apologetically, or to avoid the subject. This could not promote alertness. Ninety-five per cent of the citizens of Des Moines are thoroughly satisfied that the change of two years ago was a good change. They would not go back to the old form under any consideration.

JAMES R. HANNA.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

ROOSEVELT'S CONVENTION.

Saratoga, N. Y., Sept. 28.

Twenty-four years ago the man who is absolutely dominating the Republican convention here today was leading a forlorn hope in the three-cornered Mayoralty fight in New York City, with A. S. Hewitt and Henry George as opponents. Things have happened since then. The then exponent of the machine, the representative of the "interests," is today the champion of direct nominations. This is the issue the State machine has selected for its last and decisive stand against the radical and progressive forces in its party.

Before the convention which nominated Blaine for the Presidency, the insurgents of that day entered into a solemn agreement that in the event of Blaine being nominated they would withdraw from the convention and refuse to support the nominee. Roosevelt was a party to that agreement. It was one of the great disappointments of George William Curtis's life when Roosevelt deserted, went back on his promise and supported Blaine. As editor of Harper's Weekly he quoted those lines from Browning:

"Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat."

At a later date, when Roosevelt was beginning to loom on the horizon as a political star of the first magnitude, the editor of *The Public* dubbed him a "swashbuckler," and in the light of subsequent events I imagine he has never had occasion to change his estimate of the man. For swashbuckler Roosevelt was, and swashbuckler he is today.

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What manner of man is this that could violate, with impunity apparently, the confidence of men like Curtis, who can sound the depths of real democracy