

# HOPPER FOR MERGER OF COUNTY OFFICES

**Economies Would Follow Centralization of Functions, Register Says.**

## TITLE WORK DUPLICATED

**Recommends Abolition of Useless Offices and Enlargement of Register's Duties.**

John J. Hopper, Register of New York County, went on record yesterday as being strongly in favor of centralizing the five county offices within New York City and placing them under the same control as are municipal offices today. In a letter to Chamberlain Bruere and Commissioner of Accounts Wallstein, Register Hopper sets forth what he considers the advantages of a changed method of conducting the county offices. He wrote in part:

"The principle that the functions of the five county offices should be centralized and placed under the same control as the municipal offices is today generally accepted by all, except those who are willing to sacrifice the public welfare for matters which are of temporary personal benefit to themselves. The working out of detailed specifications of reorganization is difficult, and in this respect I feel that your offices are greatly to be complimented for the thorough and courageous treatment which they have given to the details of the reorganization plans.

"I believe not only that the economies you show can be obtained with an actual increase in public convenience, but that in some respects you could go even farther than you have.

### Title Work in Two Offices.

"My own experience and study of the work of the Register's office, as well as the backward example of the recent separation of Bronx County, has convinced me that if all of the work relating to all classes of instruments which affect title to real property were placed under one office management (with branch offices in the several centres of population) it would greatly add to the convenience of the public, decrease operating expenses, and increase the stability and safety of titles. At present there is a division of work in this respect.

"The Register's office contains the main portion of real property instruments, but in the County Clerk's office are notices of lis pendens and mechanics' liens, filed for the purpose of giving notice of claims against real property. The County Clerk is required to keep locality indexes for these instruments which are similar to the locality indexes kept in the Register's office. Notices of lis pendens and minor liens should

be filed in the Register's office, and the block indexes of the County Clerk's office could then be consolidated with the block indexes in the Register's office, with a resulting economy in administration and an increase in public convenience.

### Suggests an Immediate Economy.

"I suggest that all functions relating to real property instruments be transferred to the Register's office and other remaining duties united with the City Clerk's office."

Mr. Hopper said he believed the office of Commissioner of Records should be abolished. The establishment of the Torrens system, he said, would not only centralize authority but would consolidate work by putting in the Register's office every paper that affects real property. From the point of view of revenue, he said, an effective Torrens law would place the Register's office on a profit-producing basis. He continued:

"If all the titles in Manhattan were registered and the scale of fees now charged by title companies were adopted, the income to the city for Manhattan alone would be \$30,000,000, most of which would be profit. The scale of fees in use in Massachusetts would produce a revenue of \$6,000,000 for Manhattan alone. I mention these figures to show the economic reason New York City has in favoring a true Torrens system, aside from the incalculable benefit accruing to land owners directly.

### Urges Real Torrens Law.

"So, too, if we had a real Torrens law in the county our old records would become gradually of less and less importance as far as titles are concerned, and when the county is entirely under the Torrens law the records of this office would be valueless altogether as far as title searching is concerned."

Such a law, he said, would mean the elimination of the Bureau of Preservation of Public Records, which costs \$18,460 to maintain, and also the Recording Bureau, which costs \$27,000.