

Fallacy of City Manager Exposed

The idea originated with Mr. Lewis at the Moraine Hotel. Apparently he never knew what a city manager form of government really meant. He thought it was a sure panacea for all the ills he supposed the city was suffering from. The idea is even now only half baked so far as Mr. Lewis and his supporters understand it.

They have heard that Winnetka is better governed than Highland Park and that it has a village manager. Hence we must have one or we shall not be so well off as Winnetka. They have heard that Glencoe is better governed than Highland Park and that it has a village manager. Therefore we must have one or we shall lag behind. They never knew that the statutes of the State of Illinois provided for a managerial form of municipal government but limited that form of government to municipalities with a population of 5,000 or less.

Perhaps they do not know now that a bill has been introduced in the Senate (No. 43, February 2, 1927) to amend the managerial form of government act permitting cities and villages having a population of less than 500,000 to appoint a city or village manager. Their constantly shifting ground on a city manager suggests that the idea is a mere slogan to catch votes and to placate the disgruntled, and that they have never thought out the idea to the end. Nor have they apparently at any time examined the commission form of government act (Article XIII of the Cities and Villages Act of 1872). They do not seem to realize the nature or character of Article XIII. Signs are not wanting also that they do not seem to realize the nature or character of Park was governed. They have assumed that because the political pond was placid it must be stagnant.

They have laid all manner of corruption at the door of Mayor Hastings' administration.

They have resorted to propaganda, another name for unfairness, cheapness and insincerity, to make our people believe there is something rotten in the body politic and that the only cure is a city manager. Like the nurses who innocently killed off six babies, they don't know what is in the bottle. By a campaign of insinuation, by aligning themselves with the anonymous Citizens' Taxpayers Association, by captious criticism of a retiring administration, and by imposing on the credulity of some of our citizens, they have made it necessary to expose their fallacies, to point out the maudlin character of their criticism and to see that the electors are fully and fairly advised as to the issues.

Highland Park is organized under the Commission Form of Government Act (Article XIII of the Cities and Villages Act of 1872). It has a mayor and four commissioners. The mayor is head of the department of public affairs. His duties are prescribed by ordinance and include the supervision and control of the police department, the health department, the corporation counsel and the city clerk. Mayor Hastings has discharged the duties of that office since 1915, when Highland Park came under this form of government. He is also president of the council.

Commissioner Frank L. Cheney is head of the department of accounts and finances and is ex officio vice president of the council. His duties are fixed by ordinance and include the supervision and control of the city's finances, and of the city collector and city auditor. He has filled this office for four years. Prior to that he was head of the department of streets and public improvements.

Commissioner Joseph B. Card is head of the department of streets and public improvements. His

duties are fixed by ordinance and include the repair and maintenance of streets and alleys. He is ex officio the commissioner of public works and under him there is a superintendent of streets, John Hart.

Commissioner William M. Reay is head of the department of public health and safety. His duties are fixed by ordinance and include the supervision and control of sewers, water mains, fire department and zoning.

Commissioner Lyle Gourley is head of the department of public property. His duties are fixed by ordinance and include control of all public property such as the city hall, fire station, pumping plant, snow plows, etc. He is the official custodian of the public buildings and of physical equipment of the city.

The salary of the mayor is \$600 a year, and each commissioner's salary is \$400 a year. Harry Paul is city treasurer and Edward Warren city clerk. Only the mayor and commissioners are elected. All other officers and employees are appointed by the city council.

This is the machinery under which Highland Park has been successfully managed. Mr. Lewis and his friends say that Winnetka and Glencoe are better managed because they each have a village manager and therefore we should have one. This reminds us of the school girl in the comic opera who had trouble with her arithmetic and naively remarked, "Rabbits can multiply, why can't I?" Our opponents suffer from the inferiority complex. They assume that these towns are better managed than Highland Park. That is not so. They are well managed but not better managed. Mr. Lewis belongs to the class of citizens who always think their home town is not so good as some other place they have not chosen to live in.

The facts about Winnetka are that it is organized under an old charter granted by the legislature in 1869, as amended by later general statutes governing the administration of cities and villages. It is not organized under the Commission Form of Government Act, nor under the Managerial Form of Government Act. Its government is not divided into five departments with department heads like Highland Park. It has a so-called village manager. It also has an electric light plant and a water works plant. The duties of the manager are purely ministerial. He is paid \$2,000 a year by the village out of the general funds, and for his work as superintendent of the public utilities of the village he is paid \$4,000 more out of the revenues of these utilities. He is also superintendent of the Winnetka Park District at a salary of \$1,500. The population of Winnetka is between 10,000 and 12,000. The tax rate there is over \$12 on each \$100 of assessed valuation. In Highland Park the tax rate is \$10 on each \$100 of assessed valuation. Winnetka has a board of six trustees which appoints committees and gives personal attention to all matters affecting the welfare of the village. Whatever success Winnetka has had is due to the high character of the president and members of the board of trustees. The village manager and superintendent of public utilities does not formulate the policies of the village. He merely carries out the orders of the trustees in the matter of administrative and executive detail. The trustees scrupulously refrain from delegating to him any of their charter powers, duties or responsibilities. The reputation Winnetka enjoys as a well governed municipality is due to a strict adherence to charter powers and duties. It is successfully governed not because of but in spite of the village manager. That term is only a label for a particular employee. There is no magic in the name.

If Winnetka were organized under the Commission Form of Government Act there would be no occasion for a village manager. If there is any advantage in skillful handling of administrative detail it may be found in the very form of government under which Highland Park has prospered so much during the last twelve years.

In Glencoe the situation is similar. It was organized under an old charter granted before the present constitution of 1870. It exercises charter powers as supplemented by later statutes affecting the administration of special charter towns. It has a so-called village manager who is paid \$4,000 out of tax moneys and other sums out of water revenues and the garbage tax. His total compensation is about \$6,500. His duties are fixed by ordinance, which makes him the head of the "Administrative Department" of the village, with such clerks, assistants, and employees as may be associated with him. He is under the control of the board of trustees but is given power to supervise the village accounts, collect fees, enforce all ordinances, direct the activities of the police, fire, water, sewer and health officials and departments. He is given authority to employ or dispense with the services of any employees in the several departments. He acts as purchasing agent of the village but on purchases of more than \$300 he shall first secure the approval of the village board.

Glencoe is a well governed village but nobody who knows would say that it was better governed than Highland Park. Whatever success it has had is due to the high character of its officers and not to the fact that it has a village manager. The character of the ordinance creating that office shows how perilously near the village officials may come to delegating their charter powers, duties and responsibilities to one hired man.

If Glencoe were organized under the Commission Form of Government Act it would have no occasion to appoint a village manager. Winnetka has wisely passed no ordinance creating the office of village manager or prescribing his duties. He is only an employee and not a "lord high executioner." Highland Park has had five city managers (department heads) for twelve years. Perhaps that is why it has been so well governed.

Is it "time for a change" from the commission form of government to a city manager in whom shall be vested the great responsibilities, powers and duties now imposed by law upon our department heads? Is one head better than five?

Who wants a city manager to whom the mayor is a mere understudy?

Who wants a city manager with the power to hire and fire?

Does Mr. Lewis want to abdicate the moment he is elected in favor of a high toned, omnipotent city manager whose shoes he shall fill only in the absence or inability of the city manager to perform the duties imposed upon him?

Does Mr. Lewis really know what a city manager means, or does he propose to appoint one just because it is "Time for a Change?"

Will he and his council appoint a nonresident, amere carpetbagger, to rule over us, or is all their talk about a city manager just plain political bunk?

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