# THE CITY MANAGER PLAN IN IOWA

[This is the first installment of an article on the city manager plan in Iowa, by John M. Pfiffner. The article will be continued in the January number of this magazine.— The Editor]

In 1914 the State Auditor of Iowa reported four cities operating under the "General Manager plan of government". The report of this official goes on to state that, no statute being found to provide for this form of city government, "the cities which have undertaken it have endeavored to conform to the law by electing city clerks and then giving them the additional title of city managers, with full executive authority in handling the financial affairs of their cities, within the limitations of the code." Thus, the city manager began his Iowa existence as an extralegal official. He did not come to satisfy the whims and fancies of doctrinaire faddists. He arose spontaneously to fill the need of small municipalities confronted with the necessity of spending large sums of money for paving, sewers, water extensions, electric light plants, and many other material conveniences.

The part-time elective mayor had little or no power to deal with these matters. Such authority as he possessed was often hampered by jealous councils which sought to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Annual Report of the Department of Finance and Municipal Accounts, 1914, p. ix; Chang's History and Analysis of the Commission and City Manager Plans of Municipal Government in the United States, p. 202. The report of the National Municipal League favoring the city manager plan is quoted in American Municipalities, Vol. XXVI, p. 113. On the same page the extralegal plan, then operating in Clarinda, is described. Charles P. Chase, a civil engineer of Clinton, advocates the adoption of the plan in his City Manager Plan for Iowa in American Municipalities, Vol. XXVII, p. 58.

supervise minutely the details of administration during their periodic sessions. Such irresponsibility may have worked without giving rise to glaring abuses during the nineteenth century when only the larger cities deemed it necessary to pave, when the old fashioned outhouse and cesspool were used instead of the modern sewer, when the kerosene lamp and the private gas plant largely sufficed for illumination, and when a large percentage of dwellings drew their water supplies from private wells and cisterns. When the rural municipalities began to pave their streets, substitute sewers for outhouses, extend their water mains, and build electric plants, the old decentralized administration frequently broke down. Loads of debt often added to the burden of utilities operated with recurring deficits. It was this situation that caused the inauguration of the extralegal manager plan by augmenting and dignifying the statutory office of city clerk.

In 1915 the General Assembly adopted two acts authorizing the optional city manager plan for cities and towns. One elaborated a definite form of organization which could be adopted by a majority vote of the electorate. Dubuque, Webster City, and Mason City are now operating under this statute. Another brief act of the same year authorized the council of cities with a population under 25,000 other than those operating under the commission plan to hire a city manager and consolidate under his direction certain enumerated functions and officials. This is commonly known as the city manager plan by ordinance because it can be adopted by mere ordinance or resolution of the council. Any classification of municipalities under this category must necessarily be somewhat arbitrary because several cities have hired superintendents of municipally owned utilities who have been loosely referred to as city managers. The author has selected the following nine cities

and one town as the city manager type under the Iowa law—Ames, Bettendorf, Clarinda, Iowa Falls, Manchester, Maquoketa, Mount Pleasant, Red Oak, Villisca, and the town of West Liberty. If this enumeration does not tally with the official list it is because the officials of some towns have either denied the existence of an ordinance or have informed the writer that they have never had a city manager.<sup>2</sup>

Iowa is not a Home Rule State. The special charters which still apply to Davenport, Muscatine, Wapello, and Camanche were granted prior to the Constitution of 1857 which forbade the practice. Hence, when the writer refers to the charter city manager plan he is merely following the practice of the City Managers' Association which has chosen to call those cities charter cities which adopt the plan by popular vote or referendum. Where the city manager is merely imposed on the existing organization by independent action of the council the arrangement is known as the city manager plan by ordinance.<sup>3</sup>

## THE CHARTER MANAGER LAW

Adoption.—Any city or incorporated town, including municipalities governed by commission or under special charter, may adopt the charter city manager form as outlined in Chapter 328 of the Code of 1927.<sup>4</sup> The mayor must call an election on the question of adopting the plan not less than thirty nor more than sixty days after he is presented with petitions containing the signatures of electors equal in number to twenty-five per cent of the votes cast for mayor in the last preceding municipal election. If more than ten per cent of the electors live in each of two or more town-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Laws of Iowa, 1915, Chs. 95, 180.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Public Management, Vol. IX, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6615, 6783.

ships the petition must bear the names of ten per cent of the voters of each of those townships. The laws applicable to elections in cities under the general law apply to this special referendum. If the election changes the form of government the result must be certified to the Secretary of State by the mayor.<sup>5</sup> No such certification is needed if the referendum is adverse to change,<sup>6</sup> in which case the question can not be again submitted to the voters until two years have passed.<sup>7</sup>

Election of the Council.— If the next regular city election occurs within one year after the adoption of the city manager plan the first council is not elected until that time. If the next regular election is more than a year away the mayor must, within ten days, proclaim a special election, giving thirty days notice. Cities having a population in excess of 20,000 elect five councilmen while others elect only three.8 In the case of a city having a population between 20,000 and 75,000 lying in two townships divided by a watercourse, there are to be only four councilmen, two from each township. It is commonly claimed that this was placed in the original enactment of 1915 to take care of the sectional rivalries in Waterloo where the adoption of the plan was contemplated.9 Councilmen elected at a special election called by the mayor assume office on the first Monday after election and hold office until the next regular biennial municipal election, and until their successors are elect-

<sup>5</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6616-6619.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See a letter from the office of Secretary of State of Iowa, dated June 8, 1927, signed by S. L. Ostrem.

<sup>7</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6620.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The Forty-second General Assembly lowered this from 25,000 to 20,000 in order that Mason City might have five councilmen.— Laws of Iowa, 1927, Ch. 170, amending Code of 1924, Secs. 6621, 6622.

<sup>9</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6622; Supplemental Supplement, 1915, Sec. 1056-b1.

ed and qualified.<sup>10</sup> At the next biennial election where three councilmen are to be elected, one shall be elected for two years and two for three years; where five are to be elected, two shall be elected for two years and three for three years. At each following biennial election there are elected a member or members of the council to succeed for a term of three years, those whose terms expire the first of April following the election and there are also elected successors for those whose terms expire one year after the following April first. Thus all councilmen are elected for three years after the original apportionment of terms, but some do not take office until a year after they are elected. Such an arrangement is probably calculated to guard against sudden changes in policy and protect the manager plan from the vicissitudes of passionate politics while at the same time preserving representative institutions.

Elections are non-partisan, at-large, and with no attempt at proportional representation. The commissioners are supposed to represent the city at large. Sectional or ward interests are submerged. Ballots show the time when the candidate's term is to commence and nomination petitions must specify the length of the term of office for which the candidate seeks nomination. The terms of aldermen, mayor, or councilmen in office under the old plan cease as soon as the new councilmen have qualified.<sup>11</sup>

The Mayor.— At the first meeting of the newly elected council that body selects one of its members to act as presiding officer and chairman and he is to be designated as mayor. He is to be recognized by the courts and officers of the State as the official head of the city upon whom civil process may be served. He may take command of the po-

<sup>10</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6624.

<sup>11</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6625, 6626.

lice and govern the city by proclamation at times of public danger and during an emergency, and is the judge as to what constitutes such an emergency. The law provides that the election "of a member of such city or town council as mayor shall not give him or confer upon him any additional power or authority, except such as is herein provided and such as is ordinarily exercised by a presiding officer." As a matter of fact the mayor is merely presiding officer of the council and ceremonial head of the city. It usually devolves upon him to welcome distinguished visitors and present them with the key to the city, make speeches at the laying of cornerstones, and make other official contacts with the public on behalf of the municipality. From the standpoint of legal authority he has no more power than other members of the council. Both the mayor and other members of the council serve without compensation.13

Powers and Duties of the Council.— The regular meeting of the council occurs on the first Monday of each month. Special meetings may be called by two councilmen. All meetings are open to the public. If the mayor is not present a temporary presiding officer may be selected from those present. In five member councils three constitute a quorum, while only two are required where the council is composed of three members. The yeas and nays must be called and recorded on every vote; and every motion, resolution, or ordinance must be reduced to writing before the vote is taken.<sup>14</sup>

The council appoints certain officers who are responsible to it rather than to the manager. They are the city clerk,

<sup>12</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6645-6647.

<sup>13</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6633.

<sup>14</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6648-6650.

the police judge, city solicitor, assessor, and members of the library board. It may also appoint a corporation counsel and assistant solicitors.<sup>15</sup> Instead of serving as a board of review, as in cities and towns under the general act, the council appoints three persons to constitute a local board of review.<sup>16</sup>

Every ordinance or resolution "appropriating money or ordering any sewer or street improvement, or making or authorizing the making of any contract, or granting any franchise, or the right to use and occupy the streets, highways, bridges, or public places of the city or town, for any purpose, shall be complete in the form in which it is finally passed, and, except an ordinance or resolution for an improvement, the preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, which contains a statement of its urgency, shall remain on file with the city or town clerk, for public inspection, at least one week before its final passage or adoption."

The law further provides that with certain exceptions ordinances shall not go into effect until the elapse of ten days after passage. During the ten days the voters of the city may protest through the medium of petitions bearing the signatures of the electorate equal to twenty-five per cent of the number voting at the last preceding general or municipal election. If adequate petitions are presented to the council the operation of the ordinance is suspended. If the council fails to repeal the ordinance it then goes to the electorate at a regular or special election. If the majority favor the ordinance it becomes operative and can not be repealed or amended except by a vote of the people. The council may submit a proposal for its repeal or amendment

<sup>15</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6651.

<sup>16</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6653.

<sup>17</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6657.

at any succeeding general municipal election. Every ordinance passed shall be signed by a majority of the council and recorded before it goes into effect.<sup>18</sup>

The Manager.— The council is authorized to appoint a manager "who shall be the administrative head of the municipal government of the city or town in which he is appointed." The manager need not be a resident of the municipality at the time of his appointment. The law specifically declares that the council shall consider only the candidate's qualification and fitness, ignoring all considerations of political faith. During the absence of the manager the council may designate some qualified person to perform the duties of his office. The manager must before taking office swear to support the Constitutions of both the State and the United States, take an oath of office, and execute a bond for the faithful performance of his duties.<sup>20</sup>

The Manager's Duties.— It is the duty of the manager through his control of the police department to see that the laws and ordinances of his municipality are faithfully enforced and executed. He must attend all council meetings and recommend to the council such measures as he may deem expedient for the good government of the city or town. He is authorized to supervise and direct every appointive officer of the city except those appointed by the council — the clerk, police judge, solicitor, corporation counsel, assessor, board of review, and members of the library board. He must supervise the performance of all contracts for work done for the city, make all purchases of material and supplies, see that they are received, and inspect them to

<sup>18</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6658-6664.

<sup>19</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6665.

<sup>20</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6666-6668.

see whether they measure up to the qualifications and specifications of the contract. He has the power to employ, discharge, and fix the compensation of all employees of the municipality except as otherwise provided by law. He has the power to summarily discharge without stating the cause any officer or employee whom he has authority to employ.<sup>21</sup>

The manager is charged with the supervision and management of all public improvements, works, and undertakings, and has charge of the construction, improvement, repair, and maintenance of streets, sidewalks, alleys, lanes, squares, bridges, viaducts, aqueducts, public highways, sewers, drains, ditches, culverts, streams, watercourses, except those under the authority of a park commission, and all public buildings. The city manager supervises and controls market houses, crematories, sewage disposal plants, and farms. He must enforce all obligations of privately owned utilities enforceable by the municipality. He has charge of the making and preservation of all surveys, maps, plans, drawings, specifications, and estimates for public works or public improvements; the cleaning, sprinkling, and lighting of streets, alleys, and public places; the collection and disposal of waste; and the preservation of tools and appliances belonging to the city or town. The city manager manages all municipal water, lighting, heating, or power plants, and transportation enterprises. He also has general charge of the recreational facilities of the city or town, including parks, playgrounds, public gymnasiums, and public bathhouses.

The city manager may institute a summary inquiry into the conduct of any employee or officer under his supervision. Those in charge of such an inquiry have the power to compel the attendance of witnesses, the production of books, and papers, and other evidence and to punish for

<sup>21</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6669.

contempt any person who shall fail to attend and testify as a witness when duly summoned, or who shall fail to produce any books, papers, or other evidence under his control when required to do so.<sup>22</sup>

The manager is authorized to take active control of the police, fire, and engineering departments of the city or town, and employ such assistants or employees as are deemed advisable. He may issue and revoke licenses within the limits of the law, but all licenses must be signed by both the clerk and manager. The city manager is supposed to keep the council informed on the financial affairs of the city and of its future needs. He has the power to appoint or employ persons to fill places for which no other mode of employment is provided. He also has the power to administer oaths.<sup>23</sup>

The manager holds office at the fiat of the council, and may be dismissed by it at any time. The council may require him to do any special thing which is not of itself illegal. The salary of the manager is set by the council and paid upon the presentation of an order signed by the presiding officer of the council and of the clerk. The manager may not appoint a councilman to any municipal office.<sup>24</sup> The law also provides that the manager shall not enter into any political activity calculated to promote the interests of any candidate for councilman.<sup>25</sup>

Budget and Accounts.— The city manager is charged with the preparation and submission to the council of an

<sup>22</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6669 (9-14).

<sup>23</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6669 (15-18).

<sup>24</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6674-6676.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6676. For an account of the attempt to use this statute against O. E. Carr, see City Manager Magazine, Vol. VI, p. 32; The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), April 2, 1924; State of Iowa v. O. E. Carr, Criminal Case No. 5083 in the District Court of Dubuque County.

annual budget based on estimates of the expenses of the various departments. These department estimates are expected to show the expenses of each department for the preceding year and indicate where increases or decreases are recommended for the coming year. The draft budget must be printed in the local newspapers two weeks before submitted to the council where it is taken up in open meet ing so that any taxpayer may have full opportunity to lodge objections and protests.<sup>26</sup> The law authorizes the manager to "see that the business affairs of the municipal corporation of which he is manager are transacted in a modern and scientific method, in an efficient and businesslike manner, and that accurate records of all of the business affairs of the city or town under his management, are fully and accurately kept."27 Most managers are not content with the mere keeping of accounts required by the State. G. J. Long of Webster City has developed a cost ledger for the general city government covering over one hundred and fifty categories of expenditure. He is thus able to trace any item back to the invoice, buying order, and receiving party at any time. He has similar ledgers for each utility plant and claims that this sort of accounting has made possible many economies including the reduction of electric rates by three cents per kilowatt.

Before the tenth day of each month the manager must make an itemized report to the council, showing in detail the receipts and disbursements for the preceding month. After receiving the approval of the council these reports are printed in the official newspapers of the municipality.<sup>28</sup> In this manner the public is kept fully informed about the financial affairs of the city.

<sup>26</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6670.

<sup>27</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6671.

<sup>28</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6672.

Civil Service.— When Dubuque adopted the manager plan in 1920 the general civil service laws applicable to cities were not in effect in city manager municipalities. Dubuque set up a sort of extralegal civil service commission which held examinations and made appointments to the police and fire departments upon the basis of merit.29 Statutory civil service for manager cities was enacted by the Thirty-ninth General Assembly in 1921.30 All of the municipal civil service laws were consolidated into Chapter 289 of the Code of 1924. In manager cities this act applies to all members of the police and fire departments except the chief of police, the chief of the fire department, matrons, janitors, clerks, stenographers, secretaries, and casual employees.31 Chiefs may be appointed from men on the civil service list but managers are not confined to this list in making their appointments of heads of the fire and police departments.<sup>32</sup> The Iowa civil service law is applicable to a much larger range of employees in commission cities having a population in excess of 100,000.33 When there was some agitation for the city manager plan in Des Moines in 1926 it was pointed out that the civil service employees outside the police and fire departments would lose their rights in the change.<sup>34</sup> The law regarding pensions for policemen and firemen is applicable to city manager cities; hence a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Letter from O. E. Carr, dated Fort Worth, Texas, January 22, 1927, and addressed to R. L. Jackson of Mason City. This letter is now preserved in the files of the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City.

<sup>30</sup> Laws of Iowa, 1921, Ch. 216.

<sup>31</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 5694.

<sup>32</sup> Laws of Iowa, 1925, Ch. 127; Code of 1927, Sec. 5699.

<sup>33</sup> Code of 1924, Sec. 5694.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> See an opinion by Corporation Counsel Reson S. Jones, dated January 11, 1926, and addressed to W. F. Mitchell, Superintendent Department of Streets and Public Improvements. A copy of this opinion is on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City.

change in form of government does not impair their status in this respect.<sup>35</sup>

Abandonment.— If a municipality has once adopted the charter manager plan it can not abandon it until it has operated under its organization for six years. After this period of city manager rule has elapsed a city or town may vote to become organized under the general law or to resume its special charter if so organized at the time of adopting the manager charter. Abandonment is determined at a special election called by a petition containing the names of at least twenty-five per cent of the electors of the city or town. If a majority of votes cast are in favor of abandonment the officers for the new organization are elected at the next following biennial election and the city manager plan ceases to function when they have qualified.<sup>36</sup>

#### THE ORDINANCE MANAGER STATUTE

In 1915 the General Assembly of Iowa passed an act authorizing the establishment of the office of city manager by ordinance of the council.<sup>37</sup> This law is optional with all cities and towns except those having a population in excess of 25,000 and those organized under the commission plan. The manager is appointed by a majority vote of the council, and he holds office during the pleasure of that body which may remove him by a majority vote. His compensation is also set by the council.

The law permits the council to provide that the manager "shall perform any or all of the duties incumbent upon the street commissioner, or manager of public utilities, cemetery sexton, city clerk, and superintendent of markets, and

<sup>35</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6684.

<sup>36</sup> Code of 1927, Secs. 6687-6690.

<sup>37</sup> Code of 1927, Ch. 327.

that he shall superintend and inspect all improvements and work upon the streets, alleys, sewers, and public grounds of the city or town, and perform such other and further duties as may be imposed upon him, and possess such other and further power as may, from time to time, be by ordinance conferred upon him."<sup>38</sup> It is further provided that when the manager is invested with the powers and duties of any appointive officer the appointment of such officer shall either be canceled or no new appointment shall be made.

This law is generally regarded as not applying to elective officers. Consequently it was ill adapted to first class cities until 1927, because the main administrative officers were elective. The Forty-second General Assembly made these officials appointive by the council, however, and it is now possible to apply the ordinance manager plan to first class cities having less than 25,000 population.39 The statute has furthermore been interpreted as not authorizing the transfer of the mayor's control of the police force or any of his judicial prerogative to the manager. Under the first ordinance the West Liberty manager acted as marshal, but the appointment of that official is now in the hands of the mayor, although the manager is in de facto control of the police. The original ordinance at Ames gave no authority to the manager over the police. Former Manager P. F. Hopkins, however, did actually supervise much of the police activity in cooperation with the mayor. As a consequence the new ordinance at Ames gives the manager such authority over the police as the mayor may delegate to him.40 This is probably as far as the ordinance could legally go.

Legally the city manager by ordinance is inherently weak. The ordinance is usually drawn by some one who is not

<sup>38</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6613.

<sup>39</sup> Laws of Iowa, 1927, Ch. 141.

<sup>40</sup> Ames Ordinance, No. 380, July 11, 1927.

really familiar with the principles involved, usually the city clerk or some council committee. It is usually looked upon at first as an experiment which can be done away with at any council meeting if it does not measure up to expectations. Furthermore, it may be a mere whim of the council. Invariably it has no strong backing by any group of citizens. Ordinances do not as a rule give full authority to the manager, and it is not possible to obtain maximum results where there still exists a division of authority.

As a matter of fact a successful administration by an ordinance manager is largely the result of an extralegal growth. Its operation is guided by a body of unwritten customs and practices evolved upon the ground, each individual city presenting as many variations as do so many individual national governments. The charter is largely an unwritten law, developed and determined by the whims, fancies, and desires of successive managers and councils.

In cities where the manager has from the outset displayed courage, judgment, and administrative ability, mayors and councils have been happy in delegating to him successive grants of authority and new duties entirely outside the scope of the original ordinance. The result is that an efficient manager finds himself, as time goes on, becoming increasingly responsible for the general administration of the municipality while the original ordinance with its meagre statement of powers remains the written source of his authority. The danger arising from such a situation is that a new manager trying to abide by the written provisions of the ordinance would inevitably leave much undone that had been expected of the old manager. During his régime at Ames Mr. Hopkins gradually came to exercise a range of administrative authority far in excess of his fragmentary ordinance powers. It is gratifying to note that the Ames ordinance has been reframed so that his successor

will be legally invested with most of the prerogatives formerly exercised extralegally by Mr. Hopkins.<sup>41</sup>

City manager ordinances are comparatively a recent development. As a result they are more or less fragmentary. It is to be hoped and expected that a general code of city manager law and practice will be provided to meet the defects of the existing order.

# DUBUQUE

In 1900 the city of Dubuque purchased its privately owned waterworks. The operation of the new department soon resulted in deficits of from \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year. In 1907 a new State law enabled the management of this utility to be placed under the supervision of an independent board free from political control. Meters were installed, minimum rates were reduced from \$15.00 to \$9.00 per year, and \$200,000 worth of improvements were made from earnings in eight years. The success of this form of management prompted some to ask why other municipal affairs could not be handled more efficiently in the same manner. Dr. C. James Alderson, former mayor of Dubuque, feels that it "may be safely said that the advocating of the need of a better plan for the conduct of city business had its inception in that board of water works trustees."

Agitation was carried on for several years through the press, public debates, speeches, and the organization of better government movements, but these efforts were largely unsuccessful. In 1919, however, the labor organizations were induced to take up the cause through the

<sup>41</sup> The writer's remarks have been greatly influenced by information contained in a questionnaire filled out by manager P. F. Hopkins of Ames sometime during the fall of 1926. Mr. Hopkins assumed his new duties as city manager at Mason City on June 1, 1927. Both the old and new ordinances at Ames, and Mr. Hopkins's questionnaire, together with a communication from Dr. G. W. Rutherford of Iowa State College, are on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City.

efforts of J. Harold Wallis. With the assistance of Dr. Alderson and others a sufficient number of signatures was secured and an election was ordered.<sup>42</sup>

On Monday, January 26, 1920, the electorate of Dubuque chose to abandon its special charter and become organized under the charter city manager plan. The vote was 2386 for the adoption of the plan and 1523 against it, a majority of 863.43 The first election found two complete tickets in the field, one having the direct support of those who had conducted the city manager adoption campaign. This ticket was headed by Dr. Alderson, the man whose enthusiasm, energy, and untiring effort is so largely responsible for the adoption of the city manager form of government in Dubuque. Three councilmen were elected from this ticket and two from the so-called non-partisan group. Dr. Alderson was elected as the first mayor under the manager plan.44

#### THE MANAGERS

The first city manager of Dubuque was Ossian E. Carr, formerly city manager at Cadillac, Michigan, Niagara Falls, New York, and Springfield, Ohio. His first salary at Dubuque was \$8400 per year. On January 1, 1922, this was raised to \$10,000. A year later Mr. Carr's recommendation that this be cut to \$9500 was accepted by the council.<sup>45</sup>

Mr. Carr is frequently described as having many qualifi-

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Dr. James Alderson, dated August 22, 1927; The Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of Dubuque, Iowa, City Water Works, pp. 6, 7.

<sup>43</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), January 28, 1920.

<sup>44</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), April 7, 14, 1920.

February 14, 1927, and signed by members of Dubuque's first city manager council protesting against alleged misstatements by J. C. Lewis in a speech at Mason City. This document is now on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City. See also Yearbook of the City Managers' Association, 1921, p. 19, 1922, p. 26; White's The City Manager, pp. 114-122.

cations necessary for a first city manager. He is fearless and aggressive, with an undaunted determination in the face of obstacles. He is characterized as a doer rather than as a compromiser. In Dubuque he was able to place public opinion squarely behind the new régime by a series of immediate accomplishments no less worthy than spectacular. It is inevitable that a man with such a positive personality should also antagonize some persons. Mr. Carr and the city manager plan had their enemies. One \$50,000 libel case brought by a paving contractor for alleged damaging remarks by Mr. Carr was not dismissed until the summer of 1927, after the defendant had been kept in suspense by continuances, delays, and expensive trips back to Dubuque.

On another occasion Mr. Carr's opponents slandered his character by calling him vile names and making accusations of an exceedingly unfavorable nature. The manager defended the administration and himself against this onslaught at a meeting of the Good Government League, an organization having for its purpose the political defense of the city manager plan. This procedure was criticized by the Home Rule Club, an opposition association, which claimed that Mr. Carr's action was in violation of the statute prohibiting the manager from participating in any political activity. His friends defended his speech on the ground that it was merely made in defense of his own character, not as a political maneuver. Nevertheless, an indictment was brought against Mr. Carr in the district court for violation of the statute prohibiting political activity, but the case was eventually dismissed when the district court of Dubuque County sustained Mr. Carr's demurrer which maintained: (1) that the indictment violated that section of the State Constitution guaranteeing liberty of speech and of the press; (2) that the acts charged did not constitute a

felony presentable by indictment; (3) that the statute forbidding the city manager to engage in political activity was so uncertain and unintelligible that it did not permit the court to impose punishment; and (4) that the indictment was unauthorized and void, and the court could impose no punishment. The court merely sustained the demurrer without rendering an opinion. The case was perfunctorily appealed by the State to the Iowa Supreme Court which, on November 28, 1925, affirmed the decision of the district court. This decision raised grave doubts as to the constitutionality of the section prohibiting a manager from presenting facts as to his administration, especially when these statements are made in reply to charges made by the opposition. In the Code of 1924 this section was amended omitting the reference to the punishment of political activity as a misdemeanor, but retaining the provision that a manager taking part in election contests is to be removed from office.46

In June, 1925, Mr. Carr was appointed city manager of Fort Worth, Texas, a post which he still holds at a salary of \$15,000 per year in a city two and one-half times as large as Dubuque.<sup>47</sup> His successor in Dubuque was C. E. Douglas who was chosen manager of Dubuque, in July, 1925, at an initial salary of \$8000 per year. He had previously held positions as city manager of Lawton, Oklahoma, and Newport News, Virginia.<sup>48</sup> On March 15, 1928, O. A. Kratz of Astoria, Oregon, succeeded Mr. Douglas who had resigned to enter the contracting business. Mr. Kratz, who is a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), April 2, 1924; City Manager Magazine, Vol. VI, p. 32; National Municipal Review, Vol. XII, p. 264; State of Iowa v. O. E. Carr, District Court of Iowa, Dubuque County, Criminal Case No. 5083, transcript on file with State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City.

<sup>47</sup> Public Management, Vol. IX, p. 280.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> City Manager Magazine, Vol. VII, p. 22; Public Management, Vol. IX, p. 277.

graduate in civil engineering of Michigan State College at Lansing, had previously worked as construction engineer on the Panama Canal and had participated with General Gorgas as sanitary engineer in the clean-up of the zone. After returning to the States he served as bridge engineer for the Canadian Bridge Company and as city engineer for several cities. In 1922 he was selected city manager of La Grande, Oregon. In January, 1923, he became city manager of Astoria, Oregon, just after a terrible fire destroyed about forty of the most important blocks of the city with a loss of \$14,000,000. The phenomenal successes of Mr. Kratz in rebuilding a badly damaged city, together with his varied experience, prompted the Dubuque commissioners to choose him among some thirty applicants. His initial salary was fixed at \$8500.49

### PERSONNEL

Members of the municipal force in Dubuque quite naturally were somewhat apprehensive as to the security of their tenure under the new order. No wholesale dismissal followed, however. The present city clerk, auditor, engineer, manager of the waterworks, waterworks engineer, city solicitor, and many others were office-holders under the old order and are now enthusiastic supporters of the city manager plan.<sup>50</sup>

There were some dismissals. The payroll was reduced by \$2500 per month through the elimination of unessential positions.<sup>51</sup> It is probable, however, that more of those on the payroll eight years ago have been retained in the city's service than would have been under the spoils system of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), January 31, February 5, 1928.

<sup>50</sup> The writer visited Dubuque and interviewed various officials and citizens on August 9 and 10, 1927, and on August 10, 1928.

<sup>51</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 5.

old mayor and council régime. The city manager went outside the city for two men. The fire underwriters demanded a reorganization of the fire department and suggested the employment of Mr. Fisher of Jacksonville, Tennessee, as chief. A building inspector also was hired from elsewhere.

The city engineer of Dubuque wrote to the engineer of a neighboring city which was contemplating a change to the city manager form: "I can assure you as a city employee and department head for almost seven years under the City Manager Form of Government, that it is the best thing that can happen to your office and your city." He had also worked for the city prior to 1920. The chief of the fire department writes that according to his belief "the Firemen of Dubuque are given more favorable consideration by the City Manager, than are the Firemen in other cities in Iowa by their Officials." A member of the police force since 1912 states that the department "is run on the Merit system, instead of the old political pull. You do not need to be afraid of offending some Alderman's friends when you make an arrest, and being called on the carpet for enforcing the law".52

Mr. Douglas considered Dubuque too small a city for the adoption of a rigorous merit system. The organization is not so large that the manager can not know each individual and have some idea of his merit and efficiency. Vacancies can be easily filled by selecting competent men whose whereabouts and capabilities are known. The manager is also in a position to bring about the necessary dismissals. A street foreman was recently discharged for alleged payroll padding, the garage force was turned over to eliminate stock losses, and the building inspector was dismissed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Letter from City Engineer of Dubuque, dated January 24, 1927; letter from Chief of Fire Department of Dubuque, dated January 16, 1927; letter from Fred C. Seyler, dated January 23, 1927.

Prompt action in eliminating less desirable men has a healthy effect on the morale of the municipal force and is an essential managerial prerogative. The members of the police and fire departments with the exception of the chief are, of course, under statutory civil service rules. Mr. Kratz also is only lukewarm to civil service rules as affecting a city of the size of Dubuque.

As a matter of form the council makes appointments anew each fiscal year. The confirmation of the manager's appointees does not give any legal sanction, for the manager is supposed to have, and in Dubuque does have, entire freedom of action in this respect. "Although the Iowa statute provides that city employees appointed by the council and those appointed by the manager shall hold office at the pleasure of the council and manager respectively, reappointments are made at the beginning of each fiscal year." 53

## MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Bonded Indebtedness.— On April 1, 1920, the general indebtedness of the city of Dubuque amounted to \$1,104,823.39. By March 31, 1927, this had been increased to \$1,342,913.41 to which may be added \$282,000 of dock bonds classified as municipal industry bonds, but for which a tax has been levied. Water bonds to the amount of \$354,500 are gradually being retired out of profits. During the year ending March 31, 1928, however, \$52,000 of general bonds were cancelled without issuing others, leaving the general bonds outstanding at the reduced figure of \$1,290,913.41.<sup>54</sup> The enemies of city manager government have seized upon this increased debt as an example of its extravagance and

<sup>53</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), April 6, 1927, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Statement of Manager C. E. Douglas to the press, March 27, 1927; Report of City Auditor of Dubuque, April 1, 1927, to March 31, 1928.

proof of its failure. Most of the citizens of Dubuque, however, regard this expenditure as a justifiable investment. Every dollar borrowed since 1920 has been put into some new improvement of which Dubuquers are proud. This has been accomplished while retiring about half of the old debt, some going back as far as 1852. It has been done without increasing the tax levy up to 1927 when dock bonds necessitated a slight increase, and the millage levy has actually been lower than immediately prior to 1920. Construction overdrafts frequently resulted where the statutory twenty-five per cent of value of adjoining property would not pay for the cost of excavation through solid stone. The result was that the city had to assume the cost of thousands of dollars worth of this excess. It is true that Dubuque's total debt is larger in dollars and cents today than in 1920, but this additional borrowing was not to make up deficits in the running expenses of the government as of old. These new bonds have been used to refund some old deficits and to build much needed improvements some of which are self supporting and are retiring their own bonds. It must also be remembered that the value of municipal possessions has increased thousands of dollars as the result of this expenditure.

A twelve mill sinking fund tax levy now in force is expected to retire all existing indebtedness in ten years. This sinking fund has existed only on paper, however. The demands for construction for the first seven years made necessary the use of these funds for other than sinking fund purposes. During the last year, however, the general bonded debt has been reduced and Mr. Kratz announces that he intends to avoid further overdrafts for improvements and to continue a debt retirement program. Already many bonds of the old régime have been retired before maturity. One such transaction involving a discount pur-

chase which saved \$1945 in principal, and \$47,550 in interest would have been paid on the issue had they run to maturity. Every bond issue has been arranged to mature serially and a tax has been levied to take care of payments of both principal and interest even before the State law of 1927 required this procedure. A curious mathematician might care to figure the amount of interest paid by Dubuque upon the refunded issues of 1852 during the last seventy-five years. At compound interest it would probably form an endowment fund the income on which would reduce the tax levy many mills. The present city hall building, which was built in the early fifties and is rapidly becoming inadequate, had not yet been paid for in 1920. The same was true of a large sum representing public aid to railroads. 56

The first manager council was confronted with the question of disposing of \$210,138.00 worth of "loan warrants". These were obligations of the city bearing 5 per cent interest. No one knew what they were issued to pay for and they had no maturity date. They were about the size of a dollar bill and interest payments were endorsed on the back. When there was no further room for such endorsements they were called in and new ones were issued. This practice had been going on for thirty-five years without any apparent legal sanction. Banks had refused to accept them as collateral upon orders of the examiners and their market was becoming increasingly low and limited. It is exceedingly doubtful whether the city could have been made to pay them. Mr. Carr immediately disposed of them, however, by means of a \$180,000 bond issue plus aid from the collection of delinquent taxes. Only \$39,850 worth of these warrants

<sup>55</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, pp. 11, 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Clewell's The Council-Manager Plan in Dubuque in Public Management, Vol. IX, p. 152; Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 7.

are now outstanding and they will be retired by 1929. The city has thus been saved a very considerable sum of parasitic interest payment without an increased levy.<sup>57</sup>

Prior to 1920 Dubuque bonds were in ill repute and hard to dispose of among local investors. Today the citizens clamor for them. There was extremely lively bidding for a recent issue of wharf bonds, resulting in the payment of a premium of \$7951.50 on a \$217,000 issue at  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The successful bidder attributed this to Dubuque's reputation for good government.

The manager's statement to the press of March 27, 1927, summarizes very well the improvements that have resulted from recent borrowing. "Approximately 5 miles of storm sewers were installed, ranging in size from 24" to 66", excepting Bee Branch sewer which is larger. Thirty miles of water mains were laid. Forty miles of streets were paved. Rafferty's Slough and Industrial Fill at 4th Street were graded, converting approximately thirty acres of swamp lands into valuable industrial sites, part of which have already been sold. The new Rockdale Road was constructed, making a short and safe route for traffic." It should also be noted that the water improvement bonds are not being paid out of taxation. A sinking fund is being accumulated faster than it is needed. Moreover, while a tax has been levied to take care of the first few months of the new wharf bonds, it is expected that this improvement will not only retire these bonds, but also pay a considerable profit into the city treasury. In addition to this, the Rafferty Slough reclaimed lands are being sold at prices which will reimburse the city for all expenditures. Thus Dubuque is emerging from a period of expenditure on public works that has necessitated considerable healthy borrowing.

<sup>57</sup> Statement of Manager C. E. Douglas to the press, March 27, 1927; Report of City Auditor of Dubuque, April 1, 1927, to March 31, 1928.

Many of the expenditures will be self-retiring, however; and those that must be paid from taxation will be retired with a millage levy actually lower than that required for the year 1919.

Delinquent Taxes.—In 1920 thousands of dollars worth of taxes in Dubuque had not been paid. In some cases delinquencies extended back many years. As a result the feeling grew that taxes did not have to be paid and evasions were increasing, often being encouraged by the intervention of precinct politicians. This chaotic condition interfered with official compliance with the statutory procedure regarding the handling of delinquent taxes, and the public refrained from purchasing tax certificates because of lack of confidence that they had been issued in compliance with the legal technicalities required by law. Mr. Carr authorized the city to deal directly in special assessment delinquencies and a Citizens Investment Company was organized under the leadership of Councilman Brede to buy tax certificates in which the city was legally unable to deal. As a result many thousands of dollars worth were purchased and legal action commenced for their redemption. The city is realizing practically 100 per cent on all of these certificates, with the exception of one defeat in court on an action involving about \$25,000. The great benefit, however, has come in the impetus toward prompt tax payment. As soon as the city purchased these old tax certificates the municipal treasury began to experience a materially increased flow of tax money. The net result increased municipal revenues about \$300,000.58 These taxes were owed in practically all cases by people who could afford to pay and many of them would have soon been outlawed.

<sup>58</sup> Report of the City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 5; Clewell's The Council-Manager Plan in Dubuque in Public Management, Vol. IX, p. 152.

The Tax Levy.— The millage levy as of March 27, 1927, was 54.75, a reduction of 7.25 mills since 1919.59 This has been done while the State, school, and county levies have increased. Thus in 1914 the Dubuquer paid 59.18 of his tax dollar to the city. In 1924 the city received only 38 cents of it, while in 1926 the city's share of tax money was still further reduced to 36 cents on the dollar. The city tax levy for 1928 was increased to 59 3/16 mills. This increase was necessitated by a number of municipal improvements: (1) the river barge line terminal bond issue, authorized by vote of the people; (2) an increase in the general fund necessary to finance the installation of stop-and-go electrically operated traffic signals; and (3) an increased levy for the park fund for the acquisition and maintenance of the new park and tourist camp on Grand View Avenue.61 The millage levy for 1928, however, was still less than that of 1919. The expenditures for general government for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1927, were \$12,247.76 under the budget estimate and \$20,639.54 less than the previous year, in spite of salary increases totaling \$27,000.00.62 Mr. Kratz has prepared a loose-leaf ledger which shows constantly the status of the several funds in percentage of annual appropriations expended as compared to percentage of time elapsed. In this way he can keep the various departments within their respective appropriations, thus enabling the city to keep up its sinking fund requirements and eventually to reduce taxes through reduced interest, a much desired goal in any city.

<sup>59</sup> Statement of C. E. Douglas to the press on March 27, 1927.

<sup>60</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), April 10, 1927.

<sup>61</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), July 26, 1927. The 1926 Dubuque budget is found in the same newspaper, March 12, 1926; and a distribution of municipal expenditures is found in the issue of April 24, 1927.

<sup>62</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), April 10, 1927.

Purchases.— All purchases go through the city manager's office. Bids are sought on all purchases. Notices of contemplated purchases are placed on a bulletin board in the city hall daily. Anyone can bid and the purchases go to the lowest bidder, quality and service being equal. In addition to bulletin board notice the dealers are consulted over the telephone by the manager's secretary. This system of giving all a chance was inaugurated by Mr. Kratz because he had heard complaints of favoritism under the old system whereby some attempt was supposedly being made to divide the business equally among all dealers in the city. The manager is given full leeway without council interference as long as the budget is not exceeded. Warrants are drawn without waiting for the council's approval so as to take advantage of all discounts. As a matter of practice and courtesy, however, all large and extraordinary purchases are first considered by the council.

A requisition blank is made out in four copies. The yellow original and the blue copy go to the vendor who must invoice as per the schedule contained thereon and indicate its number. The pink copy goes to the requisitioning department, and the white copy remains in the city manager's office. All purchase orders, no matter how small, are now signed by the city manager. Mr. Kratz feels that this procedure has reduced purchases merely by moral effect. When the vendor delivers the goods he delivers the original yellow copy with his invoice and retains the blue copy for his files. As soon as the material is received the man ordering it inspects it and certifies his approval on the pink copy which goes to the city manager. The invoices for a firm for any one month are gathered in the auditor's office under a single voucher to be inspected and signed by the city manager before payment. Mr. Kratz has introduced a new voucher form which allows the invoices to remain unfolded

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in standard letter size so that he can swiftly but accurately inspect them at a single glance.

Accounting.— The accounting department is manned by three officers: the clerk, the auditor, and the treasurer. The clerk is appointed by the council and acts as a sort of secretary to that body, the board of health, and the board of review. He attends all council meetings and makes suitable records of all of its transactions. The auditor is appointed by and responsible to the manager. He is in general charge of municipal records. He audits each bill and turns it over to the treasurer for payment. Both the auditor and the treasurer sign warrants. The treasurer is also appointed by the manager. He has general custody of the city's funds. The waterworks has its own system of cost accounting and also handles all consumers' accounts. The water department's funds are in the custody of the general accounting office, however.

The 1927 Budget.— There was some friction in the council over the adoption of the new budget in 1927. Three councilmen insisted on retrenchment and objected to any further bond issues. It had been necessary during the previous year to fund \$275,000 worth of overdrafts for municipal improvements. The council felt that it was time to halt further construction beyond budget estimates. After stirring up considerable feeling, the budget was finally reduced so as to require a tax levy of ¼ of a mill less than that of the previous year. A large paving program was rejected by the council upon the presentation of remonstrance petitions. The council also reduced the salaries of various city officials as follows: the manager, \$400; the fire

<sup>63</sup> The Dubuque Leader, March 18, 1927.

<sup>64</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), February 16, 1927.

chief, \$400; the city solicitor, \$300; the police judge, \$200; the engineer, \$180; and building inspector, \$300.65 economies were put through by the three newer members of the council, one of them a member of the Dubuque Trades and Labor Congress. Mayor Harlan G. Melchoir and Councilman Edward Schrempf, also a labor member, were very much opposed to such action. The mayor said that the salary cuts were not justified.66 Councilman Schrempf filed his resignation and remained absent from council meetings,67 but he was finally induced to withdraw his resignation and return.68 Enemies of the city manager plan seized upon this controversy and petitions for an abandonment election were soon circulating,69 but a sufficient number of signatures was not secured and it is reported that the project was abandoned. Members of the council who voted for the various cuts were, however, endorsed by the Good Government League as recognized friends of the plan at the time of their election in 1926<sup>70</sup> and the incident is not now regarded as in any way endangering or reflecting upon the manager or the city manager plan of government. The salaries of the officers reduced have since been raised, in some cases to their former level.

## PUBLIC WORKS

Followers of municipal affairs have watched with considerable interest the application of scientific management

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), February 16, April 1, 1927; The Dubuque Leader, April 1, 1927.

<sup>66</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), April 1, 1927.

<sup>67</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), April 2, 1927.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), April 7, 1927. The issue of April 3rd contains a long statement by Mayor Melchior upholding the city manager plan.

<sup>69</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), April 10, 1927.

<sup>70</sup> See an editorial in The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), of March 31, 1926,

to the establishment and maintenance of public works. It is estimated that thousands of dollars have been saved at Dubuque by economies thus effected. The street superintendent now reports directly to the city manager. This arrangement leaves the city engineer free to devote all his time to engineering problems as they arise. A complaint system has also been installed. All complaints come to the manager's desk in duplicate, one copy is referred to the proper department head with orders either to do the work, or investigate and report back, the duplicate remaining on the manager's desk until the complaint has been adjusted. The city manager holds frequent consultations with the street superintendent and city engineer where maintenance problems affect improvements.

Streets.— It is claimed that in 1919 there was not one thoroughfare completely paved across the city of Dubuque. Now there are several which make up a part of the upwards of 120 miles of paved streets traversing the city. About one-third of this program was laid during the five years following 1920, at a price that is claimed to have saved the abutting property owners a great deal of money because of Manager Carr's insistence on open bidding, a practice not always used in Dubuque heretofore. Indeed, complications arising from resentment toward its efficient operation are alleged to be responsible for the libel suit hanging over Mr. Carr for almost two years after his departure from Dubuque. It is claimed that paving contracts awarded by Mr. Carr in 1924 carried price schedules from 75 cents to 95 cents per yard cheaper than in neighboring cities.<sup>71</sup>

also Councilman Earl Yount's denial of having signed a statement opposing the city manager plan in the same paper on February 24, 1927.

<sup>71</sup> City Manager Magazine, Vol. VI, p. 18. For dismissal of libel case see The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), May 10, 1927.

Competition on the bidding was induced by advertising for bids for various types of paving. "In that way the hard top bidder had to cut to meet the soft top prices and vice versa. Some very spirited bidding resulted. With all the saving to the city, the contractors still had a good profit."72

One of the most notable improvements of recent years is the building of Rockdale Road. Ingress and egress to Dubuque on the south formerly was confined to a long, narrow, and poorly paved thoroughfare which traversed railroads, hills, and the most undesirable sections of the city. In cooperation with the State Highway Commission the city planned and constructed a new approach to the city which provides a smoothly graded entrance while considerably reducing the traveling distance. Construction involved the cutting away of a limestone cliff at a cost to the city in excess of \$100,000 in addition to the State expenditure. Supporters of the project insist that this improvement will yield enormous dividends to Dubuque.

Street construction, as well as almost all departments of municipal administration in Dubuque, is complicated by the topography of the city. The Mississippi River bottoms afford a considerable acreage for industrial purposes. The retail section is built on a gentle rise from which huge limestone bluffs rise abruptly two hundred feet to the residence district. While these cliffs make Dubuque probably the most picturesque city in Iowa, they also present problems in the construction of public works which do not confront the prairie municipalities. On the other hand there is some compensation in the fact that they furnish cheap construction material.

Manager Kratz has inaugurated a system of street improvements which demands that all of the various types of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Clewell's The Council-Manager Plan in Dubuque in Public Management, Vol. IX, p. 342.

construction be done at the same time. Among other economies, this results in tearing the streets up only once. He has also perfected a concrete mixture for pavement which is expected to overcome defects in wearing capacity formerly thought to be inherent in local limestone. He has moreover introduced a type of gutter that will permit the construction of private driveways with much greater facility. Mr. Kratz is strongly in favor of installing a municipal paving plant which will permit the laying of a two-inch slab of asphaltic concrete on the less frequented streets. Such a plant saved a great deal of money at his former city.

The Municipal Garage.— Under the Carr régime the city purchased a garage with the proceeds of the sale of an unnecessary fire hall.<sup>73</sup> It is a spacious and modern building which would be regarded as good property by any investor. This institution houses and cares for 26 pieces of motor equipment not including those of the fire department which maintains its own motors. Mr. Douglas claims that the municipal garage is one of the city's best money-makers in the sense that equipment upkeep is handled more cheaply than if performed by private garages. Superior care thus keeps machines operating long after their normal replacement periods have expired. There has recently been installed a depreciation accounting system by which every minute of a truck's use is accounted for. It is hoped that as the municipal debt is decreased funds will be available so that prefigured operating costs may enable the auditor to set aside depreciation funds for each vehicle so that its replacement can be provided for when it wears out. Every car belonging to the city is given a thorough inspection once a week.

<sup>73</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 5.

The garage is manned by a superintendent and two mechanics. The superintendent keeps a record of the time each vehicle is in use together with a minute history of its cost and condition. In this way he keeps tab on practically every piece of movable equipment used in the public works. It was formerly impossible to keep an account of stock. Things were in the habit of disappearing in the manner in which the man of the street popularly supposes public business to be run. A complete turnover in help together with the inauguration of the recording system described above has, however, entirely relieved this situation. Where gasoline was formerly lost at the rate of thirty gallons per day, it is now handled without loss.

Rafferty Slough Improvement.— A few blocks south of the business district and near the Mississippi River there existed until very recently an unsightly and unhealthy marsh known as Rafferty's Slough. Under the city manager régime this has been filled with sand pumped from the river. In this manner approximately thirty acres of property valuable for industrial purposes have been reclaimed at a cost of \$140,000.74 It was valued at \$156,882 in the report of the examiner from the State Auditor's office for the year ending March 31, 1926. This land is being sold for industrial purposes at figures approximating the cost of the fill. Already several pieces have been disposed of. Industrial Fill Number Two, sometimes known as Fourth Street Fill, reclaimed about five acres adjacent to the highway across the river bridge.

The Municipal Wharf.— Dubuque has built a huge wharf and river warehouse in contemplation of the revival of Mississippi River freight traffic. The electorate has

<sup>74</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 11.

voted \$282,000<sup>75</sup> worth of bonds for this purpose and construction was completed during the summer of 1928. The wharf is under the jurisdiction of an independent dock commission. Although a tax has been levied to take care of the bonds issued for this improvement, it is expected that they will eventually be retired from dock receipts. The city bears no part of the operating or maintenance costs; it receives 15 cents per ton net on all freight handled in addition to warehouse charges. The construction of a municipal grain elevator for river traffic is under consideration. A surprising volume of freight is already going through the terminal and Dubuquers are quite enthusiastic over the prospects of an imminent river revival.

City Hall Improvement.— The city hall built in the early 50's had been allowed to deteriorate for years. It was unsuitable for city offices, a market in the first place, and every administration planned for a new building. The council manager administration, when it made its financial survey, found that not a single one of the old City Hall bonds had been paid. They had been refunded three times. A new building was out of the question. So the fifteen old stoves heating the building were replaced with furnace heat; the old leaking gas lights were taken out and electric lights substituted. The building was, and is, unsuitable and inadequate but it will be made to serve until the city can afford modern offices.<sup>76</sup>

Recreation.— The city supports an all-year recreation program and is about to assume the expense of a full-time director. In the summer eight supervised playgrounds are

<sup>75</sup> Auditor's Report for City of Dubuque, for April 1, 1927, to March 31, 1928.

<sup>76</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 7.

largely attended. A municipal bathing beach is very popular. In the winter the municipal athletic field is flooded for hosts of enthusiastic skaters. City Manager Kratz acts in a supervisory capacity over this activity.

Parks.—Although the parks are under the supervision of an independent board, the city manager always meets with that body and enters actively into its deliberations. This often leads to a coöperative pooling of resources that is mutually advantageous. Eagle Point Park affords a view of the Mississippi River that is well worth the notice of any Iowan. From a two hundred foot limestone bluff one may view the father of waters for many miles and gaze upon three American Commonwealths.

The Water Department.—The city of Dubuque purchased the waterworks from its private owners in 1900 for a consideration of \$545,000.78 It had been under the supervision of an independent water board, was free of debt, and was being quite efficiently operated. The old board had been ultra-conservative, however, and the department was in need of many improvements. "Pumping stations were old and not fire-proof. The equipment was worn and becoming obsolete; water supply was low, storage reservoirs were uncovered. Thirty streets that had sanitary sewers were without water mains, and a large number of petitions were on hand asking for water connections to their property."

A survey of the National Board of Fire Underwriters placed the city in a rather high rate class. Under the city

<sup>77</sup> Douglas's Dubuque's All-Year Recreation Program in Public Management, Vol. IX, p. 92.

<sup>78</sup> Annual Report of the Dubuque City Water Works, 1927, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> Annual Report of the Dubuque City Water Works, 1927, p. 8.

manager régime \$631,039 has been spent in improvements on the waterworks and as a result Dubuque property owners have been saved \$50,000 per year in insurance premiums. To cover these improvements only \$375,000 in bonds were issued, the remainder coming out of the earnings of the department. Today practically every home in Dubuque has access to the city water and the extensions completed during the last seven years are adequate to take care of a 100 per cent growth in population. The bonds are being retired serially by funds provided through a sinking fund into which the department pays \$2700 each month. Already this sinking fund is accumulating faster than it is needed and the surplus is being invested in bonds of the city of Dubuque. None of the indebtedness is being paid out of taxation. On March 31, 1928, the water plant was valued at \$1,512,371.08 of which \$1,287,114.98 represents the city's proprietary interest. Thus the net worth has been increased \$745,114.98 over the purchase price, every cent of which has been accumulated out of department earnings.80

Under the city manager régime the stations have been made fireproof. The Eagle Point station is housed in a new building with most modern equipment. Although the steam auxiliary equipment is ready for use in an emergency, pumping is now done by electrically operated pumps. A favorable off-peak power rate of one cent per K.W.H. has been accorded the city. There have been erected a 7½ million gallon reservoir, a 600,000 gallon standpipe, a new fireproof booster station, and extensive repairs and replacements have been made. By March 31, 1926, the following distribution equipment was in use:

<sup>80</sup> Annual Report of the Dubuque City Water Works, 1927, p. 8, 1928, p. 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> A statement of the growth of the water department at Dubuque is contained in *The Telegraph-Herald*, March 20, 1927. A valuation statement is in the same paper for April 20, 1927.

98 miles of mains, 40 per cent increase since 1920

698 fire hydrants, 56 per cent increase since 1920

1665 valves, 77 per cent increase since 1920

8249 meters, 46 per cent increase since 1920

993/4 per cent of the pay rates figured on meter readings

In 1928 bookkeeping transactions involving fire hydrant rent paid to the waterworks and interest payment to the city on the amount of the original bonds were abolished.

The superintendent of the water department, J. W. McEvoy, and the engineer, J. W. Straub, are the same men who held those positions under the old water board. The advantage of having the water department under the city manager has been that decisions can be made quickly through immediate conference with the manager instead of waiting for the dilatory procedure of a board meeting.

As in all well-run municipal utilities the Dubuque water department keeps an accurate record of all operating costs. The report of the examiner from the State Auditor's office for the year ending March 31, 1926, said that the "city should be proud of its water works and the showing it is making."

#### POLICE

Police Court.—Prior to 1920 justices of the peace functioned as police judges. In 1920 only \$1675.50 in fines and costs were collected. By 1922 this had been increased to \$12,652.10 and in 1924 to \$18,209.78,82 much more than enough to take care of the salary of both the manager and the police judge. When one considers that the population of Dubuque was virtually stationary during this period, no conclusion can be reached other than that there must have formerly been great laxity somewhere. The Dubuque Times-Journal comments as follows:

<sup>82</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 49.

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There are those, however, who have paid these fines, because they violated the law! Many of them are loud in expressing preference for the old free and easy condition. Some 48 proprietors of "soft drink parlors" have had their licenses revoked on account of selling intoxicating liquors! Do you think they favor the city manager plan?

Again it is well to ask why and probe deeply when a man opposes the city manager plan. There's a reason usually, a personal one.

Some soft drink parlor proprietors have pled for a second chance and promised to do better. They have backed their promises with a \$500 deposit with the city manager. Three of these men broke their promises. They have enriched the city treasury by \$1,500. In individual cases the new form of government is, to say it mildly, discomforting. These men object to the city manager plan, but there's a reason in their cases.<sup>83</sup>

The Police Force.— In 1920 the police of Dubuque made 698 arrests. In 1924 the number had increased to 2034. In 1914 over 60 per cent of the arrests made were for intoxication while the percentage was only 20 per cent in 1923. "At the same time it is probable that many of those arrested for intoxication in 1923 would not have been considered intoxicated in 1914. While prohibition does not prevent drunkenness yet it does seem to have a strong deterrent effect." This apparent increase in police activity was accomplished with an actual reduction in the number of officers and a static population. From 1920 to 1924 the number of lodgers harbored by the police increased approximately four-fold.

During the year 1924 Dubuque thieves succeeded in retaining only 7 per cent of their loot. The police recovered 55 stolen automobiles out of 59 reported stolen. The de-

<sup>83</sup> American Municipalities, Vol. XLV, p. 79; Sunday Times-Journal (Dubuque), February 18, 1923.

<sup>84</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 49.

partment's motor equipment consists of three automobiles, one of which is used to patrol outlying districts, and two motorcycles. "All men work in eight hour shifts, and are equipped with up to date regulation revolvers. Target practice is held regularly once a month. Meetings are held frequently for discussion of police work."

The following letter indicates what a veteran member of the police force thinks of the city manager plan:

In 1914 and up to the time the City Manager Form of Gov't. went into effect, I was on the same beat from 6 A. M. until 7 P. M., seven days a week, with a vacation period of ten days a year. The night patrolman worked from 7 P. M. until 6 A. M. and the same number of days, and same vacation period. We are now working in three shifts of eight hours, and every man on the Dept. has one day of rest each week, and 15 days vacation each year with pay, and also with pay for each day off every week. And we owe it all to the City Manager Plan. We are being paid a salary of \$140.00 a month and a chance to make extra at dances, etc. As compared to the old days at \$90.00 per month. The Efficiency of the Dept. has increased to a very very large extent since this system went into effect. The men are for it — to a man, and this also includes the head of the Dept. Chief Giellis, for now no alderman or Ward Heeler can dictate to him, for he is the head of the Police Dept. and no one dictates to him, and a chief any city could be proud of, for the Dept. is run on the merit system, instead of the old political pull. You do not need to be afraid of offending some alderman's friend when you make an arrest, and being called on the Carpet for Enforcing the law. . . But things of that kind are in the discard, and none of us need hesitate in making an arrest, where the laws are being violated or broken, but to be sure that we are right, and then go ahead, for we are backed up by the administration to a man. We surely have an up to date Police Dept. Have Target Practice at stated Periods and all have the same type and make of gun (colts 38 Cal. Police Positive), where before there was an array from 22 cal. to 45 cal. and some had not been fired for months, and failed to work when needed, but that is a thing of the

<sup>85</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 47.

past, for we have gun inspection at the same time we have target practice, also uniform inspection, which was never done under the old system. It used to be the more greasy the uniform, the more service stripes, for you could judge the length of service by the clothes.<sup>86</sup>

The Fire Department.—If Dubuquers are proud of one thing it is their fire department. In the old days there was a fireman's strike every winter because the department funds were exhausted. Joseph W. Fisher, the man appointed fire chief by Manager Carr, was recommended to Dubuque by the National Board of Fire Underwriters. From 1907 to 1918 he had been a member and officer of the Nashville, Tennessee, fire department. He came to Dubuque from Jacksonville, Tennessee, where he had been chief of the department maintained there by the Federal government for the Old Hickory Powder plant. Thus two fire chiefs in Iowa manager cities came from positions charged with the protection of war supplies for the national government. It takes an exceptional man to manage firemen. He must be above all a tactful disciplinarian. Firemen have much idle time on their hands and they must not be allowed to use this leisure in such a manner as to become lazy and soft. They must be at all times prepared to meet an emergency that may require supreme effort coupled with utmost courage, and to maintain their efforts for days at a time. These conditions make the fire department a knotty problem in management.

As far as results are concerned, the Dubuque fire insurance premiums have been reduced \$50,000 or \$60,000 per year since the advent of the city manager. The average fire loss in Dubuque for nine years previous to 1921 was

<sup>86</sup> Letter from Fred C. Seyler addressed to R. L. Jackson, President of the City Manager League of Mason City, dated January 23, 1927, now on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City.

\$275,373 per year. For the three years prior to 1924 it was \$45,448.04. For the year ending March 31, 1928, it was \$27,298.89.87

A system of building inspection by firemen is carried on and is credited with a large share of credit for the reduction in fire loss. Regular department drills call upon the men to simulate actual fire conditions. In 1921 a department school was organized. The school is given a large share of the honor for the increased efficiency of the firemen.

Health.— Dubuque was recently credited in press reports with having one of the lowest mortality rates in Iowa. The city manager régime coöperated with the county in establishing a department of health under a full-time physician. Unhappily the county has recently withdrawn its support but the city is carrying on the work in the best manner possible with the inadequate funds at its disposal. The number of quarantines and communicable diseases has been materially decreased as compared with former years as a result of a campaign of supervision and education. A venereal clinic receives only those cases unable to afford the services of a private physician. The general government coöperates with the board of education in carrying on a school nursing service. The municipal laboratory is estimated to save approximately \$4000 per year over what private analysis fees would cost the city. A woman inspector of food and restaurants is reported to have accomplished results very much worth while. A part time employee has enthusiastically and efficiently entered into the work of inspecting both milk and dairies. It is to be hoped that adequate means of financing this work will be found and thus Dubuque's enviable health record may be continued.

<sup>87</sup> Report of City of Dubuque, Iowa, 1924, p. 9; The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), April 15, 1928.

#### CONCLUSION

Public Opinion.— In addition to interviewing several of Dubuque's prominent citizens, the writer has had the privilege of access to the correspondence files of the Mason City Manager League which contain many letters from residents of Dubuque. The opinion is unanimous that the city manager régime has been a decided success. A veteran member of the police force has already been quoted at length. An editor states: "The city manager form of government is very much of a success in Dubuque — a success in every way and I believe it is here to stay. It lifted Dubuque out of what threatened to be its graveyard and put it on its feet. For that the citizens are grateful." A manufacturer says that "it is absolutely the best thing that ever struck our city." Still another factory executive states that "it is the most efficient method of controlling the factions, details and all other transactions coming under the supervision and direct action of the City Officials." A hotel proprietor writes: "Our city manager form of government is the greatest blessing that ever came to our city." A prominent banker feels that the "city manager form of government has done more to make Dubuque a city than any other factor or influence in its history." A dealer in building material has "no hesitancy in making the statement that the tax-payers of the City of Dubuque have been getting more for their money since the City Council Manager form is in effect here, than they ever did before, and the affairs of our city are operated on a business basis the same as any corporation would want to operate its business". The Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce writes: "During the last several years I have served as Secretary of Chambers of Commerce in the South and West and it is my experience that those cities that operate under the Council-Manager Form of Government have gone forward

at a much more progressive rate than those operating under the antiquated system which is fast being abolished by progressive cities."

Elections.— Another editor writes that "in every city election, bond issue election or other contest here since 1920 the faction favorable to the city manager form of government has swept through to a decisive victory at the polls.

There have been some contests that appeared to be 'hot' while they were going on, but the count of the votes showed that there was nothing to them. The people favorable to the present régime were always overwhelmingly in the majority. You don't hear any opposition talk in Dubuque anymore, for the opposition seems to be effectively squelched."88

In the spring of 1927 it was reported that petitions were being circulated for an election to abandon the city manager charter. Some months have passed without any such election having materialized and the writer has been informed that the instigators have abandoned the move because of lack of signatures.

The Press.—The Times-Journal, a daily paper which recently consolidated with the Telegraph-Herald, was one of the early agitators and friends of the city manager plan. The Telegraph-Herald was unfriendly during the adoption campaign, but accepted the decision of the polls with good grace. An editorial of March 30, 1924, evidenced a complete conversion:

ss This correspondence has been placed on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City. See also a letter from Charles E. Ward in American City, Vol. XXXIII, p. 294.

<sup>89</sup> The Telegraph-Herald and Times-Journal (Dubuque), April 10, 1927.

<sup>90</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), January 25, 1920.

Old Julien Dubuque made hardly any repairs on his home, and when he did the work was expensive and often inadequate. If a window glass was broken he stuffed rags in the hole and hoped for spring. If the house wife urged construction of a cess-pool he dug a make-shift affair and hurried back to his pipe and his beer. He was more interested in politics than improving his home.

But for some reason, after he invited a board of supervisors and a general manager to take charge of his house and put his grounds in order, a change for the better was immediately manifest. The old structure was repaired and repainted. He got sewers, fire apparatus, better sidewalks, his debts were gradually paid and interest payments reduced. And all of this cost him but little more than his way of living from hand to mouth, continually dogged by the money lenders.

In an editorial of March 28, 1926, the same paper says that the progress of Dubuque under the city manager plan has been so pronounced that old-timers returning to the city are astonished.

Labor's Attitude.— It is claimed that the city manager plan in Dubuque was adopted largely because of favorable sentiment aroused among the laboring classes. Labor has always had representatives on the council and three members of that body are today representative of labor. The same will be true of the new council of 1929. In the summer of 1926, however, certain crafts became disaffected through an incident arising from a contractor's refusal to hire union labor in the construction of an addition to the Canfield Hotel. The labor groups declared that the construction did not comply with the law. Several conferences were held between local labor leaders, John C. Lewis, a labor official from Des Moines, the local and State building inspectors, and the city officials. There seemed to be a general admission that the construction did not comply with the law in certain respects, but the hotel owners offered to

make the necessary changes. The city council told the manager to find the law and enforce it.91

A conference between the city building commissioner, the State sanitary engineer, and the city solicitor reached an agreement as to the changes required by law. Labor demanded that the hotel be closed during these alterations. A letter from the proprietors to the city manager expressed good faith; said that the building was built under the supervision of the building commissioner with the feeling that the law was being complied with; that the management now agreed that certain changes were necessary and was willing to make them; that according to the voluntary admission of the most aggressive labor leaders the unions were not particularly interested in enforcing the law and would call off all further agitation if the contractor would hire union labor; that there was no provision in the law authorizing a closing of the hotel during alterations; and that the owners had no quarrel with union labor, that class of working men having been used throughout with the exception of carpenters.92 The alterations were made without the closing of the hotel, but the affair evoked some criticism from Mr. Lewis and from a certain element of union men in Dubuque.

The writer is unable to say whether this defection of a portion of the labor group will have any effect on the tenure of the city manager plan in Dubuque. Most of the opposition during the Mason City campaign came from Mr. Lewis from Des Moines. A letter received from a member of the Dubuque Trades and Labor Congress, written on August 8, 1927, states: "I do not believe that I am exaggerating when I say that the great majority of the laboring men and women of Dubuque favor the city manager plan and believe that it is a great improvement in the conduct of our city

<sup>91</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), August 4, 1926.

<sup>92</sup> The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), August 7, 1926.

affairs." The labor members of the city council emphatically declare their allegiance to the city manager plan. Not one person with whom the writer came in contact expressed any fear that the Canfield Hotel affair had endangered the city manager plan.

### MASON CITY

Mason City changed from the commission form of government to the charter city manager organization at a special election held on February 21, 1927. The new council was elected at the regular biennial municipal election and took office in the following April. P. F. Hopkins, city manager at Ames, accepted appointment as the first city manager of Mason City on April 12th<sup>93</sup> and assumed his new duties on June 1st.

#### CAMPAIGN FOR ADOPTION

The adoption of the charter city manager plan in Mason City was in no small measure due to the efforts of R. L. Jackson, a resident of Mason City, who combines in an unusual degree the humanitarian and liberal sympathies of one who is looking constantly forward with an appreciation of the practical difficulties confronting those who strive for political and social betterment. A City Manager League was organized with Mr. Jackson as president; Fred J. Crawford as vice president; Inez Kinney, secretary, and W. L. Patton, treasurer. This organization sent hundreds of letters to city manager cities in all parts of the country in an effort to secure the sentiment of cross sections of the communities which had actually operated under the plan. Efforts were made to secure the opinion of as many different types of individuals, and members of as many different

<sup>93</sup> Ames Daily Tribune, April 12, 1927; Mason City Globe-Gazette, February 22, 1927.

businesses, trades, and professions as possible so that the campaign committee might be armed with answers to all possible objections. Letters poured in from all parts of the United States,<sup>94</sup> which were quite uniformly friendly toward the city manager plan and generally indicated its successful operation.

The Mason City Globe Gazette, the only daily paper in the city, was friendly toward the plan, although it did not employ daily editorials in furtherance of the cause. It gave its columns freely to the reporting of the various meetings and debates and W. Earl Hall, the managing editor, entered enthusiastically into the campaign.

There was not much difficulty in securing the number of signatures required to call the special election on the question of adoption. Over 2600 signers responded while only about 1800 were required. The commissioners were not any too anxious to call the election, but they could hardly find grounds for refusal in the face of a sufficient petition. The election was accordingly set for Monday, February 19th. The most heated and interesting part of the campaign took place during the week prior to that date.

The committee circulated pamphlets urging registration. Meetings were held at various schoolhouses and other places where speakers discussed the merits and demerits of the proposed organization. Service clubs and civic organizations did not enter the campaign, but the League of Women Voters was one organization which openly rendered aid to the movement. The attitude of the electorate seemed rather indifferent. As in many other such elections, many who voted for adoption did so without any great enthusiasm. They seemed to feel that conditions could not pos-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Through the courtesy of R. L. Jackson these letters have been presented to the State Historical Society of Iowa and are preserved in that organization's library at Iowa City.

sibly be worse and that there was a chance for improvement in the new order.

One of the most interesting features of the campaign was the opposition of union labor. It had been claimed that labor had been friendly to the plan in Dubuque where it had representatives on the council and that it had entered into a program of hearty coöperation at the time of adoption. At Mason City, however, one of the features of the campaign was a debate between John C. Lewis, President of the Iowa Federation of Labor, and M. H. Czizek, city solicitor of Dubuque, the discussion centering about the success or lack of success of the plan at Dubuque. Mr. Lewis opposed the city manager plan and Mr. Czizek spoke in favor of it.

The campaign was largely without sensational issues. Mason City was in a precarious financial condition: the budget had not been balanced for some years. Recurring deficits were met by warrants which were periodically funded by the issue of judgment bonds. As a result the city was said to have exceeded the legal debt limit. The city manager plan was urged largely as a corrective for these financial ills by a group probably representative of the great American middle class. Something had to be done to bolster up the municipal financial situation.

The election resulted in the adoption of the city manager plan by a vote of 1920 to 1413—a very light vote. The affirmative poll numbered 700 less than the total of petition signatures.

The election results indicate that the voters did not enthusiastically endorse the new scheme. It has a period of

<sup>95</sup> Mason City Globe-Gazette, February 17, 18, 19, 1927. The letter favoring the plan and signed by 35 members of the Dubuque Trades and Labor Congress is preserved in the files of the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City. An account of this debate is published in the Mason City Globe-Gazette, February 19, 1927, and The Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque), February 22, 1927.

six years in which to justify itself. In a post-election editorial the *Globe Gazette* expressed the belief "that the city manager plan, which has proved successful in scores of other places, would do as much for Mason City. . . . It is a human contrivance, however, and like all things human has its imperfections. A lively interest in municipal affairs on the part of the public will be its best guarantee of success. It will be what Mason City makes it." <sup>97</sup>

#### THE FIRST COUNCIL

In the estimation of Mr. Hopkins,<sup>98</sup> the new city manager of Mason City, the council is the most important link in the chain of the city manager organization. If a council is disposed toward constant interference in the minutiae of administration and is inclined to be jealous of the manager's prerogatives, the spirit of the plan will be defeated.

There were about twenty candidates for five council positions in the first election under the new plan. Labor chose to put in the field an entire ticket for all five places, instead of concentrating on one or two as in Dubuque. As a result no labor candidate was elected. E. S. Selby, the first mayor, is treasurer of the Decker packing concern. F. C. Eslick is in the transfer and storage business and has charge of the local yellow taxi lines. Herman Knudson is proprietor of the Kemble green houses at Mason City. L. P. Courshon is in the auto accessory and radio jobbing business. George Barrett is a young World War veteran who is engaged in a high class and extensive food and grocery business.

No member of the first council has had previous experi-

<sup>96</sup> Mason City Globe-Gazette, February 22, 1927.

<sup>97</sup> Mason City Globe-Gazette, February 22, 1927.

<sup>98</sup> The writer interviewed Mr. Hopkins at Mason City on July 14, 1927, and on August 2 and 3, 1928.

ence in city affairs. None was elected on a particular platform. The only issue in the campaign hinged on whether the manager should be a resident or non-resident, at the time of his selection, but even it seems to have failed to become decisive.

## THE FIRST MANAGER'S PROBLEM

At Ames the manager's problems were largely of an engineering nature. At Mason City he was called upon to correct ills which were more administrative and financial in character.

Mason City had been under the commission form of government since 1913. Since that time it has grown very rapidly. It is primarily an industrial city with extensive cement, brick and tile, and meat packing establishments. A large variety of jobbers serve a fruitful territory on five railroads.

During the recent period of growth those in charge of municipal administration have tried to provide for the extension of services without resorting to heavy increases in the tax levy. When improvements were undertaken they had to be paid in warrants which would accumulate until they were finally funded in judgment bonds. These judgment bonds represent the expenditure over and above revenues for general housekeeping for a period of years. To illustrate this condition let the reader assume that the head and provider for a home and family spends for family upkeep more than his income. His creditors finally sue and obtain judgment and the debts are refunded at the bank where he must pay interest on them and supposedly make some arrangement for the payment of the principal at maturity. This goes on until finally his credit at the bank will stand no further indebtedness. He must then either inaugurate drastic retrenchments to enable him to live within his income and meet his obligations or he must succumb to receivership or bankruptcy. In this case the city manager was, in effect, designated as receiver for the city of Mason City.

On April 1, 1927, there were outstanding against Mason City \$1,135,504.79<sup>99</sup> in bonds, of which \$369,000 represented judgment bonds and \$147,000 bonds issued for general expenses. The legislation of the Forty-second General Assembly prevents any such lax financial condition in the future. From now on bonds must be serial and taxes must be levied for their retirement when issued. In addition to this, about \$50,000 worth of unfunded warrants were inherited from the old régime and they could not be legally funded because the city's legal debt limit would have been exceeded. The other bonds are issued against the waterworks and for other improvements for which the city supposedly possesses corresponding assets. This means that fully half of the huge municipal debt represents overdrafts of former administrations.

Another instance of lax financial administration is evidenced in \$422,000 worth of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and 6 per cent waterworks bonds issued for ten and twenty years and not callable until maturity. One series must bear interest at 6 per cent until 1940. Some attempt is being made to buy them from the holders, but there is little inclination to give up a long term municipal bond bearing 6 per cent interest. The incentive for trying to build up a sinking fund to retire these obligations at maturity is lacking because the Brookhart-Lovrien Law takes all interest on municipal funds to reimburse State and local governmental losses in closed Iowa banks.

<sup>99</sup> See statement of outstanding bonds in Annual Report of Mason City, 1927, pp. 30, 31.

<sup>100</sup> Laws of Iowa, 1927, Ch. 131.

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## THE FIRST YEAR

P. F. Hopkins, formerly city manager at Ames, assumed his duties in that capacity at Mason City on June 1, 1927. 101 It is therefore possible to observe a little more than a year of the new régime.

The City's Finances.— The chief problem of the new city manager was the introduction of order into the financial chaos of the municipality. From March 31, 1927, to April 1, 1928, Mason City lived within her income for the first time in several years while reducing the funded and current municipal indebtedness by \$114,738.39. This was done with a millage levy approximately the same as that for several years back. It was not accomplished by curtailing expenditures for equipment or reducing salaries. It was merely the result of careful and thoughtful planning on the part of a trained and experienced expert paid by the city to do just that thing.

It is frequently thought that the city manager's salary is an unduly large drain on the municipal treasury. The \$6000 paid Mr. Hopkins is, however, less than was paid the city commissioners under the old plan. Consequently the manager's salary is not an added expense, for the mayor and councilmen are unpaid in charter managed cities. As a matter of fact, the manager began to serve for less than the commissioners formerly received.

Mr. Hopkins knew that the payrolls of the city could not be carried without an overdraft increasing the \$55,425.90<sup>104</sup> of warrants inherited from the preceding administration. He therefore directed his attack upon the payroll. The first

<sup>101</sup> Public Management, Vol. X, p. 247.

<sup>102</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, pp. 6, 26.

<sup>103</sup> Code of 1927, Sec. 6517.

<sup>104</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, p. 26.

retrenchment established his good faith by assuming the form of dispensing with his own secretary. He set up his office in the waterworks building where he could avail himself of another stenographer when needed. The building inspector and plumbing inspector had been full time men. The duties of the latter were loaded on to a licensed plumber already employed in the water department. The manager of the waterworks was found to have had building experience, a legal requisite, so he was asked to assume also the duties of building inspector. A draftsman was transferred from the water department to the engineering department. Three employees were dropped from the waterworks. Seven men were immediately taken off the streets. As a result of the elimination of these positions the payroll was at once reduced by \$1500 per month. The total reduction in the waterworks eventually reached six men without apparently injuring the service. During the first year the municipal payroll was reduced by fifteen or sixteen persons.

Purchasing for the city was formerly not concentrated. Mr. Hopkins is now in full control of purchases. Formerly each man carried an order book which was in itself an authority to buy. A requisition book has been substituted which contains a form carrying detailed directions to a central purchasing agent. Every such requisition must be approved by the manager. The purchasing agent formerly bought for the water department and now has an office adjacent to that of the city manager. In routine matters he issues the purchasing order and signs Mr. Hopkins' name. The vendor receives the original copy. The first carbon is sent to the requisitioning department which approves it when the goods are received and returns it to the purchasing agent who has the second carbon.

The approved first carbon indicates to the manager that the goods have been received and the invoice is then paid. The council has given the manager carte blanche authority to pay all bills within the discount period. Each councilman is given a typewritten list of bills and they are approved in blanket. "Whenever possible, material or equipment already available in any department, was drawn upon to meet the need of any other department; thus eliminating unnecessary duplication. A similar procedure for work that could not be performed by the department issuing the requisition has resulted in real economy and has tended to a closer co-operation between departments." 105

For the fiscal year 1927-1928 forty-two and a half cents out of every dollar spent by Mason City went for debt service. Thirty per cent of the income will be necessary until 1941 to meet existing bonded indebtedness. After 1941, a material reduction in taxes for debt service can be made, provided no additional bonds are issued. There has been some expectation that the city manager plan should result in tax reduction. At the present time this would be disastrous. Mason City has for years met increasing expenditures by increasing the debt. The taxpayer should be happy if the budget can be balanced, existing debt reduced, and improvements made without increasing the taxes.

For the past seven or eight years the tax levy has hovered around 66 mills. This year it is at that figure, an increase of ½ mill over the previous year and a reduction of ½ mill from two years ago upon the former valuation. As a result of equalization by the State Executive Council, however, the actual levy for 1928 is 63.1 mills.<sup>106</sup>

A partially successful attempt has been made to cut down interest expense by buying up bonds not yet due, many of which are not callable, from available cash in sinking funds. Sinking fund interest left in banks goes to the State under

<sup>105</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, pp. 5, 6.

the Brookhart-Lovrien Act. It therefore becomes unprofitable to finance debt retirement by the use of sinking funds if any other means are available. Bonds amounting to \$38,000 were purchased at a saving of \$13,383.27 between premium paid and interest charges to maturity. The holders of the \$122,000 water bonds, bearing 6 per cent interest and not due or callable until 1940, refused to name any price. In some cases refunding operations would have been so profitable to the city that a price of 120 was offered, but even this was refused. In addition to the above bonds, \$40,273.35 in matured bonds were paid during the year. Outstanding warrants were reduced from \$55,425.90 to \$18,960.86. The total reduction in debt amounted to \$114,-738.39, which means \$5900 less interest to be paid in 1928. The debt retirement plans for 1928-1929 contemplate the payment without refunding of \$49,000 bonds maturing within that period and the entire elimination of warrants outstanding April 1, 1928, to the amount of \$18,960.86.107

Police.— The police department was so under-manned and under-equipped that it was found impossible to economize by cutting its expenditure. Effort was therefore devoted toward increasing the efficiency of the department under existing budget conditions. An attempt was made to inaugurate the three platoon system but the man power was too small for such a move at the present time. The following new equipment was purchased: one patrol car, one motorcycle, six regulation revolvers, one bullet proof vest, and gas equipment. The identification bureau was improved to the point where it compares favorably with the standards required for such work elsewhere. Considerable effort is now being devoted to increasing the efficiency of the department. An officer was sent for two months to the

<sup>107</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, pp. 3, 4.

police training schools of Grand Rapids and Detroit, Michigan. The chief spent the summer of 1928 observing and studying under Chief Vollmer of Berkeley. On September 1, 1928, he returned with a Berkeley officer who instructed the Mason City force for sixty days. It is hoped that this training will place Mason City well to the front in police efficiency. The force needs more adequate quarters which, it is felt, must be provided shortly. Members of the force were at first skeptical toward the new régime but their confidence has been thoroughly established. The writer was informed by the men that they now enjoy the best working conditions that they have ever had.<sup>108</sup>

The Fire Department.— The Mason City fire department was also under-manned and under-equipped. Chief Thomas Conner retired on December 1, 1927, after thirty years continuous service. Mr. Hopkins brought in from the outside an experienced and technically trained chief, D. H. Shire, who had many years of experience in the Denver and Davenport departments. During the war he was placed in charge of fire protection for the Rock Island Arsenal, a post he has occupied continuously since. He is a graduate of the New York Fire School, and regards fire protection and fire fighting as sciences which must be studied and learned.

The firemen undergo a definite course of training. Classes are held every afternoon from 1:30 to 3:00 in which the men discuss tools, appliances, and apparatus. At other times they are required to solve problems while simulating actual fire conditions with equipment. Bi-weekly mimeographed questions are answered by the firemen to inform the chief of their progress. Chief Shire is trying to recruit the force with young high school graduates. He is of the opinion that firemen should have some knowledge of the

<sup>108</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, pp. 9, 10.

theory of hydraulics as well as other technical subjects. Older men with common school education are unable to make progress in these studies. Each man on the force is trained to do every job so that his training will be well rounded rather than specialized.

The fire loss for Mason City for 1927 was \$11.88 per capita which is exceedingly high. From January 1 to August 1, 1928, it has been less than forty cents per capita, a figure so low that even Chief Shire recognizes that it is partly due to good fortune. Nevertheless, a considerable portion of this good showing can be chalked up to efficient operation. Some aid to fire prevention is given by the more rigorous inspection methods employed today.

Streets.— Most of the economy in labor fell upon the street department which now operates with fifteen men as against twenty-five a year ago. A saving of about \$500 per month was accomplished through the purchase of a mechanical sweeper. One of the first acts of the city manager was to place the street department under the supervision of the engineer. The superintendent of streets is also an engineer, showing the tendency of city managers everywhere to substitute technically trained administrators for political appointees.

The city recently purchased a seven acre gravel pit from which it is surfacing this year twenty-five miles of unpaved streets which had been allowed to get in bad condition. The property owners are being assessed for this improvement at the rate of ten cents a front foot.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Report of the Committee on Statistics and Origin of Fires, National Board of Fire Underwriters, May 24, 1928; Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, pp. 4, 13, 14.

Water Department.— The waterworks had been under a special board independent of the city commissioners. The adoption of the city manager plan brought it back under the general city government. It had been well managed and was in good financial condition. The revenue, however, has not been sufficiently large to provide much leeway for the retirement of funded obligations. Six men were taken off the payroll without apparently injuring the service. There are no elevated supply tanks in which to store surplus water. The result is that direct pressure must always be supplied through pumping. Thus a considerable amount of idle steam equipment is kept in constant, but expensive, readiness. It is suggested by Mr. Hopkins that this condition be corrected by using electricity for emergency pumping purposes and erecting a large storage tank. The department is also staggering under the burden of the \$422,000 in bonds outstanding at 51/2 and 6 per cent not callable and in some cases not due till 1941. As a result of all this the net cash profit of the plant for 1927-1928 was only \$702.73 with no provision for debt retirement. 111

New water mains were formerly financed by special assessment. This expense is now paid by the city itself.

Garbage Disposal.— The new manager was immediately confronted with the necessity of rejuvenating worn out garbage disposal equipment. The furnaces were ready to fall to pieces and the heavy garbage season was beginning. Mr. Hopkins again became the engineer, donned his overalls, climbed into the dirty and grimy furnaces, and decided what needed to be done. A superfluous night employee was transferred from the sewage disposal plant and set to rebuilding the incinerators. They have thus been rebuilt with an increased capacity of 20 per cent at a saving

<sup>111</sup> Annual Report of Mason City, 1928, pp. 16-19.

of \$220 over the last rebuilding and will burn one-third less coal than formerly.

Conclusion.— The writer visited Mason City in the summer of 1927 when Mr. Hopkins had been on the job barely more than a month. He returned again in August, 1928. An attempt was made to call upon persons known to have originally been lukewarm or in open opposition to the city manager plan. While some were non-committal as to the eventual success of the plan, without exception they said that the present city manager was conducting the affairs of the city in a satisfactory manner. The first year at Mason City has apparently been a decided success.

## WEBSTER CITY

The city manager plan has been in operation in Webster City since October 18, 1915.<sup>112</sup> It was the first city in Iowa to adopt the charter form enacted by the legislature for the first time in the spring of that year; and for five years, or until Dubuque joined the fold in 1920, it was the only charter city manager city in Iowa.

It is said by those who have lived in Webster City that it was formerly a community divided against itself. There were the old up-town and down-town groups who fostered animosity and refused to coöperate for the common good. The city manager plan was born amid such surroundings. Today the community is said to be united and it is also declared by some who claim to know that the city manager plan has been to a very large extent the integrating and unifying force. Opposition was not thoroughly quieted, however, until the opponents had taken the matter to the

<sup>112</sup> For verification of this date see a letter from Edward P. Prince of Webster City to Attorney Lowell L. Forbes of Mason City, dated January 18, 1927, now on file at the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City.

polls. A member of the council under the old mayor and council government prior to 1915 edited a newspaper which took an aggressive stand against the existing régime. A special election in 1924 retained the city manager charter by a vote of 1463 to 621. Now many men formerly lukewarm or antagonistic are united in enthusiastic advocacy of the city manager plan. 114

#### MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

Probably no other thing has served to attract public attention to Webster City as much as the outstanding success achieved in the administration of her municipally owned utilities. Three prosperous plants supply the citizens with a high quality of electricity, water, and gas service at reasonable rates. The conduct of these enterprises has not, however, always sailed on smooth waters. The city managership under the direction of G. J. Long deserves the lion's share of the honor for bringing them to their present state of efficiency. In the words of one citizen, these possessions constitute a "common property, owned by all, interested in by all, giving vital service to all" and were "a common ground for common thoughts and common hopes. They saw the cost of living lessened by the cheapened services, by lower taxes and, now that the law will permit the transfer of moneys from one fund to other funds or purposes, by a tax free town, perhaps."115 Today these

<sup>113</sup> See a letter from W. F. Hunter, editor of the Webster City Freeman-Journal, dated May 28, 1927, now on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City.

<sup>114</sup> This view is substantiated by letters in the files of the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City and by information gained by the writer when he personally visited Webster City on July 13, 1927.

on file with the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa City, and published in American Municipalities, Vol. LII, March, 1928, p. 21.

utilities are valued in excess of \$500,000 as compared to \$200,000 when the plan started in 1915. On March 31, 1928, there were \$117,000 of bonds outstanding against these properties most of which represented loans issued quite recently to purchase the gas plant from its private owners. Substantial cash balances render the net indebtedness practically negligible.<sup>116</sup>

The Electric Plant.—Ordinary household users of electricity in Webster City today pay a rate of 7.2 cents per kilowatt, compared with 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 cent rates elsewhere. The generating system consists of a modern steam turbine outfit supplemented at the peak by two old Corliss units. Mr. Long's efficient operation cost records have demonstrated that this inferior equipment is too costly. At the present time, one Corliss unit is being replaced by a 2000 H. P. turbine generator which doubles the existing capacity. The river is being dammed to provide the water necessary for this new equipment and altogether the light plant is receiving improvements in 1928 amounting to \$65,000 without resort to bond issue or taxation. Sufficient funds from current earnings were on hand to finance this construction.117 The city has an electric appliance store which always pays a small profit in addition to paying rent to the fire department for the use of a part of its building. In addition to supplying electric current to the inhabitants of Webster City, three surrounding towns are supplied, one a distributing plant owned by a large private utility concern. Moreover, 350 farm homes are served, at low rates, by 175 miles of farm lines that have been built to attach to the Webster City municipal plant. Much can be written of the immense benefit received by the rural population from this

<sup>116</sup> Report of City of Webster City, Iowa, for year ending March 31, 1928.

<sup>117</sup> Daily Freeman-Journal (Webster City), November 15, 1927.

service. The current has not been off the switch board by accident since March 18, 1918, when a tornado demolished a part of the plant.

The Gas Plant.—In 1920 the gas plant was purchased from its private owners by the issue of \$75,000 worth of bonds. It is expected that they will be retired from profits without the necessity of resorting to taxation. Extensive betterments have been furnished at the old rate of \$1.50 per thousand; but during the period of municipal ownership the quality of the gas has been increased from a 350 to a 550 B. T. U. content. Improvements amounting to \$25,000 are contemplated for this plant in 1929.

The Water Plant.— The water supply is secured from deep wells by electrically operated pumps. There is now under construction, at a cost of \$20,000, an aeration and sedimentation plant for the removal of iron, hydrogen disulphide, and carbon dioxide. This improvement is being financed without resort to bond issue.<sup>118</sup>

#### PERSONNEL

The city manager of Webster City is G. J. Long, a graduate of Iowa State College at Ames in electrical engineering. After being in charge of the Webster City utilities for two years, he was appointed manager upon the resignation of the first manager, H. G. Vollmer, in April, 1917. He is now serving his eleventh year as city manager and receives a salary of \$4000 per year.

The city clerk, who receives a salary of \$1800, is appointed by the council, as are the city attorney and police judge who receive salaries of \$1200 and \$400 respectively. There is no civil service. One police chief and two patrol-

<sup>118</sup> Letter from Manager G. J. Long, dated August 1, 1928.

men receive \$100 per month each. They are appointed by the manager and report to him regarding the status of the peace several times per day. The manager never changes the police personnel, however, without convincing the council of the necessity of the change. A complete turnover was recently deemed advisable, but he did not carry it out until he knew that the sentiment of the council was with him in the matter.<sup>119</sup>

The fire department is selected by the manager. One full time chief receives \$110 per month and living quarters. Another man works for the electric department during the day and sleeps at the firehouse at night and answers calls with the rest of the department Two other volunteers make the firehouse their home. They are paid only in case they answer a fire call. Other volunteers living in their own homes make up the remainder of the fire force. Ten years ago the fire equipment consisted of a horse drawn hose-cart. Today there are two modern White trucks, one with a chemical outfit, the other with a pump. As a result Webster City enjoys an insurance rate the equal of any city of its size.

The assessor is appointed by the council. Probably as assessment grows out of its present chaos and becomes more scientific the city manager in Iowa will be given supervision over it.

There were 63 on the Webster City municipal payroll for June, 1927 — the largest industry in the city. Mr. Long has aimed to instill a spirit of friendly rivalry and competition among the various departments. He, in company with other managers, realizes that a successful administrative régime must be built upon esprit de corps and morale. Men employed in the utility plants have been encouraged to take correspondence courses in the technical field in which they

<sup>119</sup> Report of City of Webster City, Iowa, for year ending March 31, 1928.

were working. It is found to stimulate unusual interest in their work. Frequently they become so engrossed in some problem or technical discussion that they remain at the plant long after working hours.

It is sometimes urged against the adoption of the city manager plan that the municipal personnel will at once be subject to wholesale discharge and replacement. This is not true, however. At Dubuque and Mason City surplus and unnecessary positions were abolished, but otherwise only the normal changes occurred. The engineer at the light plant in Webster City is the same man who held that position when Mr. Long took charge. The men know that they have security of tenure and that they may expect gradual increases in income as long as their services and conduct are up to standard.

The city manager keeps a check on all municipal work by requiring that all under his immediate supervision report to his office to receive written instructions. If an employee is told to perform some task he knows that he must report to the manager's office where the person in charge will issue a department order in duplicate. One copy is taken by the one who is to perform the task. The other copy remains at the office. The form contains a place for the job number, date, the name of the one who gave the order, and a longer space for instructions. In the center is a space to show who was ordered to perform the task, underneath which the manager signs. At the bottom is a place to report the accomplishment or completion of the task, the date, and name of the performer, who then returns the slip to the manager's office where suitable notation is made. This system insures that various jobs will be completed and it also relieves the manager from carrying a great deal of detail in his head. The status of any given task may be ascertained at any time by simply referring to the files.

## MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Accounting.— Manager Long has demonstrated the value of accounting in placing municipal administration upon an efficient basis. The writer had the opportunity of comparing the cost records of the municipal light plant in 1915 with those of today. The former were merely crudely scrawled estimates of coal used in tons with no boiler records or notation of cost. Today a daily operating record shows the exact pounds of coal burned by each boiler during any given period of time; it also shows the K. W. H. output, the cost of the coal, the kind of coal, the boiler in operation, and many other items entering into operating costs. This system has been known to detect boiler defects showing a cost of one pound of coal per kilowatt in excess of neighboring boilers. Mr. Long says that it is this kind of accounting that has permitted the economies which have reduced the electric rates in Webster City three cents per kilowatt in the face of rising costs.

Separate ledgers classifying expenditures are kept for each of the three utility plants and for the governmental functions. The ledger for the governmental functions includes 158 items or categories of expense, the electric plant 106, and the gas plant 64. The manager is thus enabled to trace each item back to the purchasing order, invoice, and receipt acknowledgment. Such records have proved invaluable in planning for the future. Mr. Long knows exactly, by means of charts that he has prepared from these cost records, the comparative efficiency of each of his boilers, each generating unit, each type of coal and each fireman. He is thus guided in making his purchases. The Corliss units are now being replaced by a much more efficient turbine generator. This change will enable a saving of 1,000,000 pounds of coal per year alone, in addition to giving 100 per cent reserve capacity at the peak, whereas

there is now practically no peak reserve. Accounting therefore tells the manager where he stands.

It has been pointed out elsewhere in this monograph that municipal enterprises have frequently failed because there had been no effort to set up accurate cost records and depreciation reserves. This is amply indicated in a report made by Mr. Long as consultant to the council of another Iowa city which had been operating its plant at a loss with more modern equipment and much higher rates than at Webster City. In his report Mr. Long points out the absolute lack of operating records in the light plant. The off peak load was being carried by old engines that had smaller capacity than the newer turbines. No one seemed to know, however, that the turbines were operated even with their much greater capacity at a much cheaper cost than the small engine. Thus some old boilers and two obsolete engines were being operated while more modern equipment stood idle. Mr. Long points out how the difficulties at hand could be largely eliminated by adequate records. "The distribution of accounts in the electric and water departments . . . gives at a glance what portion of the utility is absorbing the greatest expense and a study of this with the operating records will not long permit of useless outlay."120

Orders are made out for every payment of money and these are allowed at council meetings, the clerk making out the warrants. The treasurer then makes the payments. The manager, the clerk, and the treasurer make out individual monthly financial reports which must tally with each other in main results. The manager's report is much more detailed than the other two. The clerk keeps the records required by the State of all municipalities and collects all

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> A report by G. J. Long of Webster City to the mayor and city council of Atlantic, Iowa, dated March 12, 1927.

rentals, while the treasurer issues a short statement showing the condition of the various funds.

Purchasing.— The city manager is, of course, in charge of all purchasing. The advantage of having a keen manager always on the alert to save municipal dollars is demonstrated by one or two instances. At Webster City it is desirable to use a considerable quantity of soda ash to soften the water before it goes into the boilers. It had been bought locally at an increasing expense. While attending a meeting of the City Managers' Association Mr. Long ran onto sources of carload supply that resulted in a saving of \$1880 per car. Early in 1927 when a shut down of Iowa mines seemed imminent Mr. Long was confronted with the problem of a cheap coal supply. The Iowa screenings, then being burned, had not heretofore been successfully stored without immersion and the immersion tank capacity was inadequate for a season's supply. The purchase of Illinois or Kentucky coal would mean increased operating costs. While piling some Iowa screenings during the previous year it was noticed that where the team and wagon had packed the coal it had not fired. One of the men pointed this out to Mr. Long and suggested that some effort be made to pack the coal stored in 1927. Mr. Long accordingly sent the municipal steam roller to the light plant and as the Iowa screenings were unloaded they were piled and packed by the roller. This process seems to have the effect of driving the air and oxygen out. This coal, stored early in 1927, had not caught fire up to the time the writer visited Webster City in the middle of July. The experiment was tried again during 1928 with entire success. This little idea saved many dollars in directing purchases.

Financial Condition.— What has the city manager plan

done for the financial condition of Webster City? It has increased the value of her municipal possessions almost half a million dollars without resort to taxation. It has reduced public utility rates below those for surrounding towns. Above all, it has eased the burden on the individual's pocketbook by reducing the tax levy from 49.5 mills in 1915 to 33.5 mills in 1927, and this without raising the valuation. Indeed, a mill levy today actually brings in less than it did in 1915. In the former year a mill yielded revenue amounting to \$1076 while today it commands only \$956. It is evident, therefore, that the actual expenses of government have been reduced. Although the gross bonded indebtedness is slightly higher than in 1915, this is explained by the bonds issued for the acquisition of the gas works. Taking into consideration the joint cash balance of \$108,872.91 on April 1, 1928, the city of Webster City has a net indebtedness much smaller than in 1915. It could sell its prosperous utilities for an endowment that would probably yield enough interest to reduce taxes to an absurdly low figure. 121

Although much of this progress might have been secured under the old mayor and council system, it can be safely said that the lion's share of the honor belongs to the city manager. Mr. Long says that the city manager system is not one man rule; it is one man responsibility. As one citizen puts it, the manager "is a personal, Webster City. He knows what he is talking about. He tells all within and without the city confines what can and what cannot be done. He is a head to the affairs municipal that the public can reach and rely upon". The manager receives scores of calls each day, ranging from the old-fashioned lady who wanted a new "wick" in the street light in front of her

<sup>121</sup> American Municipalities, Vol. LII, p. 23; Report of City of Webster City, Iowa, for year ending March 31, 1928.

house and the man who wanted the "static" shut off, to the rivalry among churches as to who should sell ice cream in the park. "There is now a man in Webster City who makes his living shouldering this responsibility. Not as it was, a body of men who made their own living and took care of the City's problems in their spare moments."

## PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

Streets.— Webster City has refrained from expensive paving and resurfacing projects during the recent high cost era. Not long ago a considerable area of asphalt was found to be deteriorating in a rather unexpected fashion. Litigation turned against the city and failed to hold the contractor responsible. Mr. Long made an extensive study of the problem and finally managed to restore and preserve the asphalt surfaces by means of a Tarvia mixture without resorting to an additional special assessment.

Webster City covers a rather large area for a municipality of its population. On the outskirts the houses are frequently quite far apart and, as is characteristic of most small Iowa cities, much of the property is not capable of bearing a paving assessment. Every resident is able, however, to gain access to his home on a surfaced street at all times of the year. The unpaved streets are surfaced with the cinders from the municipal light plant, and they are regarded as a very effective and economical surface. Gravel from the municipal pit is also used. Formerly several teams were constantly kept busy at this sort of work, which is now done by motor equipment.

Another convenience that is probably seen in few cities with a population less than 10,000 is a huge flusher mounted on a truck. The streets of the business section are flushed every morning before business houses are opened. Resi-

<sup>122</sup> American Municipalities, Vol. LII, p. 24.

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dential streets are flushed somewhat less frequently but nevertheless periodically. The result is constant cleanliness at a cost hardly greater than the old sprinkling system which gave but temporary relief.

During 1928 horse drawn street grading and maintenance equipment was replaced with trucks and motor power graders and maintainers. It is estimated that this change will result in first-class maintenance — at a saving of several thousand dollars per year over the old system.

The Cemetery.— Webster City has a beautiful and extensive cemetery which is under the supervision of the city manager. It is supported by a perpetual care fund amounting to between \$30,000 and \$40,000. This fund is largely the result of efficient management of the proceeds of lot sales.

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