AMERICAN CITY GOVERNMENT

BY

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PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, AND DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU FOR RESEARCH IN GOVERNMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

American Political Science Series

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EDWARD S. CORWIN

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EDWARD S. CORWIN

Professor of Jurisprudence in Princeton University

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To
MY MOTHER AND FATHER

PREFACE

When a writer produces something that is to be classed as a textbook, and especially a college textbook, he and his publisher take risks against which even Lloyds might hesitate to insure them. The eyes which are likely to read his production may be kind but they are exceedingly critical. On the one side stand his professional colleagues who know more about special phases of his subject than he does. They wish to know whether he has covered all the subjects which they deal with in their own courses, whether he has stated the facts correctly, clearly, and with all due qualifications, in a word, whether he has crossed all his *T*s. On the other side stand the hundreds and perhaps thousands of young men and women who may in time peruse his chapters. The text writer has fully as much cause to fear them as to fear their instructors, for they are not bound by any considerations of professional courtesy to "be nice" to the author and his work. If they dislike the book they are likely to say so; if they find nothing worth while in it, or are unable to dig out whatever ore it may contain, the instructor is almost certain to find out the facts at an early date. In either case the book is likely to be discarded, to be replaced by another which presumably is better.

The author in the present case can think of no better use for a preface than to state briefly what he has attempted to do. It has been his aim, in the first place, to stress principles rather than details of fact. An encyclopedia of municipal government has its place, but it is not the first need of the student. In presenting the principles, furthermore, the endeavor has been made to relate them to the several important steps in the normal process of popular government, beginning with public opinion and proceeding through elections and legislation to administration and adjudication. While the structure of government has not been ignored, it has been treated as less important than the working processes of government. Had structure been put first, we should have been practically compelled to give a separate chapter to the office of mayor, since nearly every city has an office under that title as a part of its governmental organization. However, not only does the mayor in one city have powers wholly unlike those of a mayor in some other place, but these powers generally fall under at least two heads, legislation and administration, which constitute distinct steps in the process of government. The author has, therefore, dealt with

these powers where they seemed to be pertinent. Thus the mayor has not been neglected but has been presented, as it were, "in two parts" or more.

In endeavoring thus to portray the process of government in cities the writer has also made an effort to keep before the eyes of his readers the whole series of social and economic groups and forces which play important parts in the urban political drama. While this attempt to vitalize the subject has, unfortunately, not made the study any easier, the author feels confident that it is unwise to over-simplify problems which are, after all, somewhat complex. This view is fortified by the author's belief that the ability and willingness of American college students to do hard work has been much underrated, and that they are among the first to see through dogmatic or inadequate statements. While the book does not describe the administration of the many services such as police and fire protection, education, health, sanitation, and public works, to provide which city governments are created, the attempt has been made to put enough into it for a full term's duty in a course in municipal government. If too much material has been presented for that purpose, some chapters may be omitted; if too little, collateral readings in other works may be assigned.

A preface should not be closed without acknowledgments. In the field of American municipal government every writer owes a debt of gratitude to such contributors as President F. J. Goodnow, Professors W. B. Munro, John A. Fairlie, Leo S. Rowe, and Howard L. McBain, to Albert Shaw, C. R. Woodruff, and the many authors of special studies whose names are cited in footnotes and chapter reference lists throughout this volume. Above all I feel an indebtedness to Professor Munro, whose assistant I once was and whose books I have used as texts for a number of years. I shall be fortunate if I have avoided plagiarism of his works. My colleague, Professor M. B. Lambie, has been so good as to traverse my manuscript and to suggest a number of ways in which it could be improved, and so too has Professor Edward S. Corwin, the editor of the American Political Science Series. Dr. Luther Gulick, Director of the National Institute of Public Administration, has most helpfully criticized my three chapters on municipal finance, and Mr. Fred Telford of the Bureau of Public Personnel Administration has done the same for the two chapters on the municipal civil service. To these men I owe special thanks.

THE AUTHOR.

December, 1924.

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AMERICAN CITY GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF CITY GOVERNMENT

NEWNESS OF THE PROBLEM

The twentieth century has brought to civilized men a group of social and economic problems which have perhaps never been equaled in complexity and in difficulty. The industrial revolution, the rise of organized capital and of organized labor, the revolutionary progress of science and inventions, the reaching out of commerce into the four quarters of the globe, the emergence of internationalism in finance and in many other fields, the spread of education, the growth of population, and the great drift of population toward the cities, have all contributed to make the world a new world, a world whose problems cannot be solved by the old knowledge. Governments everywhere find themselves confronted daily with unprecedented demands for action. The expansion of public activities in the past fifty years has been nothing short of revolutionary, yet it would seem that we are but at the beginning of a movement which will make the new world of to-day seem a very ancient thing indeed to the people fifty years hence. "We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star." [1] Thus wrote Emerson eighty years ago, yet his words are probably as true to-day as they were then.

In this volume we shall deal with but one of the great problems of the day. Cities, as we know them to-day, are the very centers of the new life of man. They are the result, in one sense, of the social and economic movements of the past two centuries. They are also a cause, a force, which works unceasingly to further the work which has already been done. They are the end of a process which began long ago and which still operates, and they are also a potent means for the creation of ever new conditions. In an infinite degree they are productive agencies, producing material, intellectual, and spiritual goods for all the world. At the same time they are immense consumers of goods and values of all kinds. The moral, social, and

[1] Emerson, Essay on *Politics*, 1844.

political conditions which arise in these hives of life and industry press upon the statesman and the legislator some of their most perplexing problems.

To the people of America the city problem is relatively new. There were no great cities at the time of the Revolution, and not over four per cent of the people lived in the larger towns, of which the largest was Philadelphia (42,444 population in 1790). The writings of Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, the authors of the *Federalist*, as well as those of Washington, John Adams, Franklin, and other leaders, are almost devoid of any mention of the problems to be dealt with in this volume. Hamilton and Jefferson, the most realistic politicians and statesmen of their day because they kept close to the economic facts of life, had some premonitions of what was to come, yet wrote little on the subject. The one hoped for, and the other feared, the rise of manufacturing towns.[2]

Even the men who guided the political life of the nation in the years from the War of 1812 to the Civil War, at a time when England was already being compelled to enter upon a new course of legislation for municipal affairs, said and wrote little about the problem. Wrapped up as they were in the perplexities of the slavery question and the westward movement of population, they saw the city problem but dimly and, as it were, in the offing, a future possibility rather than a present urgency. In the constitutional conventions of New York and Massachusetts in 1820 and 1821, leading rural members expressed fears lest the cities come to oppress the honest people of the countryside. It was feared in Massachusetts that if cities were chartered they would pass by-laws which would "ensnare and entrap" rural folk who might have to go into them on business. In the New York convention it was predicted that the propertyless masses of the city of New York would soon be sufficiently numerous to rule the entire state if they were given the vote.[3]

Such expressions of fear are to be found in other places. Alexis de Tocqueville, the shrewd and perceptive Frenchman who visited

[2] Hamilton, *Report on Manufactures*, 1791; Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, 1782, in *Writings*, Ford's ed., III, pp. 268–69, where he says, "The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body." See also Beard, *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy*, pp. 421–28.

[3] Massachusetts, *Journal of the Debates and Proceedings*, etc., *of the Constitutional Convention*, 1820–1821, ed. of 1853, p. 194; New York, *Debates and Proceedings of the Convention*, etc., 1821, p. 115.

our land in 1831–32, wrote two excellent volumes on *Democracy in America*, but found one short passage and two footnotes sufficient to exhaust the problems of cities. He thought New York and Philadelphia already too large, although the two together in 1830 had a smaller population than Minneapolis or New Orleans in 1920. "The lower orders which inhabit these cities constitute a rabble even more formidable than the populace of European towns," he wrote, and went on to say: "I look upon the size of certain American cities, and especially on the nature of their population, as a real danger which threatens the future security of the democratic republics of the New World; and I venture to predict that they will perish from this circumstance unless the Government succeeds in creating an armed force, which, while it remains under the control of the majority of the nation, will be independent of the town population, and able to repress its excesses." [4] Such was the comment and conclusion of an unusually intelligent foreigner, himself a man with considerable faith in democracy. Force, armed force, was to be the only hope of city government!

It is unnecessary to speak of the views of Calhoun, Webster, Clay, and the other statesmen of the years before the Civil War. They had little or nothing to say that is of value to us here. Lincoln and Douglas may also be passed over. The questions of free-soil and slavery were uppermost in their minds. With the rebellion of the southern states came new problems, and when the war was ended, reconstruction was the need of the day, and the establishment of a free status for the negroes. Indeed, it can truly be said that the problems of city life, and particularly the problem of city government, did not begin to force themselves insistently upon the American people until the 70's. Then the rapid growth of city populations and expenditures, and the exposure of a most shocking state of corruption in the government of New York city, compelled the people to give some attention to the new situation. When Bryce wrote in the 80's he found the problem of city government already an exceedingly urgent one, not only because cities were already large and important, but even more because at that time, in his oft-quoted words, "the government of cities [was] the one conspicuous failure of the United States." "The deficiencies of the National government" he said, "tell but little for evil on the welfare of the people. The faults of the State governments are insignificant

[4] *Democracy in America*, translated by Henry Reeve, 1904, I, p. 85, note 2; I, p. 311; I, pp. 356–57, note 1.

compared with the extravagance, corruption, and mismanagement which mark the administration of most of the great cities." [5]

From that day to this the United States have become more and more fully conscious of their great city problem. Not only is this true, but in a direct and very practical way, the people have gone forward in the work of reform year after year, and decade after decade, with ever-improving results. Local reform associations, always virile and active, have given rise to state and even national organizations. Local, state, and national publications have been established for the sole purpose of promoting the work of improving urban conditions. Colleges and universities almost everywhere, and even some of the high schools, are giving attention in their courses to the problems of municipal government and urban social conditions. Great sums of money have been donated and are being expended for the further investigation of the problems which have arisen. The daily press and the periodicals give liberally and regularly of their space to the discussion of municipal affairs. In the course of less than fifty years, Americans have had more experience of and received more information about their city governments, than perhaps any other people in the world in an equal period of time. Observation only proves what every intelligent man must believe, that much progress has been made and that more is yet to come.

CITY LIFE AND THE NATIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE

This volume will deal primarily with the problems of city government. We need first, however, to see this problem in its setting as but one phase of the city problem in general. This phrase, "the city problem," embraces all of the special problems, social, economic, political, moral, and intellectual, which arise under urban conditions.

We take note of the city in the first place as a social unit and a social problem. No one can doubt that the life of men, women, and children in cities must be somehow different from life under rural conditions. This point is worthy of careful consideration. The American stock has been drawn from many sources. The English, Scotch, and Irish, the Germans and Scandinavians, as well as many other peoples in Europe, and some in Asia and Africa, have contributed the immigrants who in the course of three centuries have become and

[5] *The American Commonwealth*, 1908 ed., I, p. 637.

are still becoming the American people. Each and every one of these peoples has been developed during the many centuries of recorded history, and for untold centuries before that, under conditions of out-door life. They were hunters and fishermen, herdsmen and farmers. Their work was in the open air, in rain and in sun. The women and the children shared the hard work and the rigors of life with the men. When the American union was founded our people were still in this condition; more than nineteen out of every twenty lived on farms or in very small villages where conditions were essentially rural.

To-day more than half of the American people already live under conditions of urban life. More than one-fourth of the entire population reside in cities of over 100,000 inhabitants. Here the greater number of the adults work at gainful occupations under roof, cooped in for from seven to twelve hours each day. They work at machines, or at ledgers, or at counters. They have little responsibility for the business in which they are employed. Their work either follows a monotonous routine, or it requires mental concentration, or it calls for quickness and dexterity rather than great physical effort. Many occupations are classed as sedentary. Numerous women, both married and unmarried, work the same long hours as men and under the same conditions. The family life is far from normal. The children, brought up in the noise, the soot, the cramped quarters, and the nervous bustle and tension of our large cities, receive in many cases inadequate attention. Then there is a small class of persons, including men, women, and children, who do no useful work and look forward to none. Life is unsettled. There are thousands of transients in every large city, native born as well as foreign born, ranging from the tramp and the hobo to the wealthy, idle and polished man of the world. In a few years many of them will be gone and others will have come to take their places. Everyone seems to be on the move.

To understand fully the social problems of the city we need to see both the people and the place. One who surveys a modern city from an air-plane, and who, though far removed from the people, keeps their social problem clearly in mind, gets an indelible picture of the city as a social unit. At the center, close-set along the streets, are block after block of high buildings. If the observer could look close enough he could, at certain hours of the day, see dense masses of people moving along narrow sidewalks, while still others in automobiles ride with swift start and stop along the centers of the streets. A little farther out the buildings are less high, and there is an occasional vacant lot.

These are, perhaps, the tenement house and apartment districts. A park or playground lies here or there. Here and there are factories, belching forth smoke. Still farther in the outskirts are the smaller residences. This section, located on a high hill or beside a lake, is well laid out and appears to be the home of the wealthy. That section along the river or the railroad tracks is where the poorer classes live and struggle to pay the rent for or to buy the little properties which the several families call home. But everything runs together; it is hard to separate one thing from another. Out beyond all this, the city seems to trail off indefinably into the country, with a hamlet or suburb barely visible here and there in the distance. The roads and railroads run everywhere, crossing and crossing again.

This is the city as the social philosopher sees it: a large number of people permanently huddled up in an area too small for their sustenance, in a set of buildings quite inadequate for the health and welfare of all, and in surroundings which are neither orderly nor æsthetic. Perhaps, in addition, they are a mixed group of people, speaking different languages, following different customs, and beset with prejudices and misunderstandings. Here are problems of health, of proper recreation, of moral welfare, of education, of assimilation, of protection, of transportation, of child welfare and family life. The school, the church, the settlement-house, and all forms of healthful social organization, find that all their resources and efforts are not too great to meet the emergent needs of a dynamic urban society. There are always new social problems. These problems, let it be observed, are distinct from the political and the economic, although all depend more or less upon one another. The city, as seen from the air-plane or by the social reformer, is not bounded by artificial political boundaries such as divide the Boston metropolitan area, for example, into a number of legally separate municipalities. Social problems are no respecters of such intangible lines as these, but overflow them in every direction.

It is the intention of these sentences merely to sketch some of the salient conditions of city life. They are not confined to the cities of a single state, but exist throughout the length and breadth of the land, from Boston to Seattle, and from New Orleans to Duluth. For this reason the problems here suggested are national in their scope. They are social and economic in their nature. They affect directly the *health* and the virility of the people. What will the American people be physically after some centuries of urban life? Is a large-scale biological process of selection now going on in our cities? Are the people becoming adapted to their new and unaccustomed environment, or are the people going to adapt the environment to themselves? The problems here suggested are those of better health administration, better factory laws, sanitation, housing, transportation, garden cities, and city planning in general. Some of the social problems directly affect the *morals* and the religious life of the people. It is evident to all that the moral hazards of city life are different from those of the rural districts and the small towns. We are in the process of throwing off old restraints and attempting to develop new ones. Vice and crime and avarice perform their sinister work within a stone's throw of our homes in cities. Where swollen fortunes are to be found within a few blocks of utter poverty, it is not surprising that the people seek for a new code of economic morals. Where riches are so easily filched from public treasuries, or can be so easily gained through political influence, shall we be surprised to find that public morals sometimes fall very low and that city governments become filled with corruption?

But then, too, while cities bring new hazards to health and to moral codes, they offer also great opportunities for intellectual and artistic development. We must place the good in the scales with the evil. Practically all the great schools of music, of art, and of applied science, and the great institutions of higher learning, are to be found in cities. It is only where great masses of people congregate together, and where there are both wealth and a high order of economic productiveness, that music, art, and learning flourish at their best. If civilization consists in the promotion of these things, then the city is the torch bearer of the procession. It is the contrasts which disturb the social philosopher and such a student of human nature as O. Henry. In the opera house the new soprano is holding her premiere, dazzling a blasé audience with the brilliance of her performance. A policeman on the sidewalk outside is picking a piece of human wreckage from the gutter.

THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE CITY

The economic problems of the city are distinct from the social, as the trunk of the tree is distinct from the leaves. When we look at the city as an economic entity, we see a network of businesses and economic relations which almost baffles description. There is, first of all, the financial structure: the banks, the trust companies, the stock and bond exchange, and the clearing house. There is a complicated system of transportation, consisting of railroads, street railways, steamship

lines, terminals of all kinds, motor-bus lines, transfer and taxicab companies, and carriers of other sorts. Factories, great and small, although apparently scattered about without order, actually have a considerable dependence upon each other, and the city in turn upon them. Grain and cattle exchanges, produce exchanges, wholesale houses, brokers' offices, and a host of other businesses engage daily in the traffic in foods. Great warehouses of different kinds provide ample storage space. Then there is the great multitude of retail establishments, from the down town department store to the pettiest corner grocery in the outskirts. It were vain to attempt even to enumerate the many other institutions which go to make up the economic city.

But a mere enumeration and description of its business institutions would not give us a complete picture of the economic city. The city is a great organization for production. It consists not only of banks and railroads, factories, warehouses, and shops, but primarily of a multitude of people considered as producers. The most numerous class in nearly every city consists of laborers, both skilled and unskilled, some organized in unions and some without such organization, who do the physical work of the city. In addition the modern city contains a large number of brain workers and others in the "soft-handed" or "white-collar" employments. Less numerous but highly influential are the professional groups, and the owners and managers of the city's industries and businesses. These and many other groups constitute the personnel of the economic city, the producers of the goods which the city exchanges with the country districts and with other cities, and which provide the stream of income which makes city life possible and desirable. While in this book we must give more attention to the city as a body of consumers, and to the manner in which the people's wants may best be satisfied, we cannot afford to overlook the broad economic foundations upon which the prosperity of the city rests. To ignore this economic structure in a discussion of the politics and government of a city is to ignore the roots, trunk, and branches while studying the tree. A good city government is an asset to the people not only as consumers and citizens, but also as producers.

THE CITY AS A PROBLEM IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The third phase of the city problem which presents itself to us is the *political and governmental*. It is this phase which will occupy our

attention throughout the greater part of this volume. The city, we learn from history, is the most natural of political units. Before there were states, and nations, and empires, cities existed and administered their local affairs. At various times in history, indeed, the city or city-state has been the chief if not the only political unit known to men. The city-states of antiquity and of the middle ages supported armies and navies and sent them forth on wars of conquest. Empires have arisen and have fallen into decay, and in their ruins have appeared again the cities from which they arose. The persistence of Rome, of Athens, of Constantinople, of Paris, as political entities through centuries of war and destruction, through eras of political growth and political decay, is no mere accident. Wherever cities exist they are distinct entities for the management of public affairs. City conditions differ so clearly from rural that cities have always a political life and organization separate from that of the countryside which surrounds them. At times the country districts are dominated by the nearest great city, as in the city-states, but even where this is not the case the city is separated from the larger area at least for some local purposes.

We are, of course, particularly concerned with the problem of city government in the United States. Here we find many different units or areas of government, large and small, all of which perform some useful work. There is a *national government*, which under the federal constitution looks after some of the general interests of the American people. Next come the forty-eight *state governments*, to which are reserved the numerous powers of government not delegated to the national authorities. But everywhere the states find it necessary and wise to provide for several overlapping series of local government areas. All the states have *counties*, or some equivalent thereof. The functions of counties vary from state to state, and even more strikingly from one section of the country to another. Almost everywhere counties exist as divisions of the state for judicial purposes and for law enforcement. In addition they have, in various states, functions connected with the state financial system, the highways, the registration of titles, and certain functions in the fields of education, health, social welfare, and poor relief. In the northeastern section of the country, from Maine to the Dakotas, south to Oklahoma and Arkansas, and back by way of Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania there are also systems of *towns*, or areas equivalent thereto. These exist mainly for minor rural local purposes, but their functions and their importance vary from state to state. *School districts* are to be

found almost everywhere, and many other varieties of special districts exist in one or more states, such as drainage and irrigation districts, park, sanitary, police, and road districts. Small semi-urban settlements of a few hundred or a few thousand inhabitants very frequently have separate corporate existence as *incorporated towns*, *villages*, or *boroughs*. Finally there are the INCORPORATED CITIES, with which this volume is primarily concerned. They are distinguished from the other local units by their small areas, their large and highly congested populations, the existence within their limits of the problems of city life, and usually by the possession of charters and special acts of legislation authorizing them to provide their inhabitants with an extensive range of important public services. The government of these cities is, in many respects, the most important problem of local government as such which the American people must solve.

The problem of city government is important both extensively and intensively. It is *extensively important* because to-day cities directly affect the lives of more people than is the case with any other unit of local government except the county and the school district. To-day more than half of the American people live in incorporated places, usually called cities, having over 2,500 inhabitants each. In 1920, 54 million people were reported to be living in urban territory, as against 51 million dwelling in rural districts. Over 37 million persons were living in places having over 25,000 inhabitants each. It should be added, also, that many of the persons reported to be living outside of cities actually work there. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that from 55 to 60 per cent of the American people come into direct contact during a considerable portion of their lives with the officers and the services of city governments. As against this number, less than 9 million in 1920 lived in incorporated places having less than 2,500 inhabitants, places which we may class as "villages," and less than 43 million lived in "other rural territory." In the matter of population, we have reason to believe, our country has reached a great turn in the road. From this time on the majority of the American people must look forward to spending their lives in cities.

Intensively, also, the question of city government has great significance. It is a fact of everyday observation that city government means much more to the people than township, or village, or county government. Few indeed are they who do not know the city from which they come, who cannot speak with pride of its advantages and with some knowledge of its government and politics. On the other

hand, the names of counties or townships are seldom known beyond the limits of the state, there is nothing so distinctive about them that one may boast itself much better than another, and the popular ignorance of their affairs is usually appalling. The city and its affairs are "set on a hill," whether the city will or no, but the county has been neatly and not inappropriately labeled "the dark continent of American politics."

The services rendered by cities to their people are almost innumerable. Their activities touch almost every department of the life of men. The people who live in cities become more and more dependent upon them. As cities grow larger they take a greater and greater part of the people's income in the form of taxes. It is almost an axiom that the larger the city, the more numerous and varied its services, and the larger its per capita annual tax levy. It is not at all uncommon for a large city to collect as much as $50 per capita per year in various forms of taxes, an amount which equals $250 per year per family of five persons; and this money is all spent by the city, wisely or unwisely, upon municipal services. Tax collections in smaller cities run as low as $10 per capita, yet the average, even for cities of 30,000 to 50,000, is over $25. These items of public expenditure can hardly be compared with the pitifully small sums levied by some rural counties and towns for the upkeep of their meager services. While statistics for rural towns are not easy to get, it is reported that some counties levy as little as $1 per capita per year for all purposes. It is clear, then, that such units of government can mean but little in the lives of their people compared with the importance of the city government to the city dweller. Except for roads, schools, and the post office the American farmer is to this day very largely independent of public services, but the city dweller could not live if his city did not perform for him a very extensive list of functions.

PHASES OF THE PROBLEM OF CITY GOVERNMENT

The pages which follow will be devoted primarily to the politics and government of American cities. The subject divides itself naturally into certain major branches, of which we may be permitted to take a preliminary bird's-eye view.

1. External relations. While American cities do not constitute independent states, with departments of foreign affairs, they have certain relationships with other governments which need to be ana-

lyzed with care. The federal government, the state government, the county, the school district, and other units, have each their separate and distinct relationships to the city.

2. **The municipal corporation.** Every city that is worthy of the name has a distinct legal existence as a municipal or public corporation. As such the city is distinct from the mass of its members. As such it has legal powers and rights on the one side, and legal responsibilities and liabilities on the other.

3. **The municipal body politic.** The membership of the municipal corporation is deserving of a close study. Who are the members, and what are their characteristics? Which of them have the voting privilege in corporate affairs? What other rights and duties have they?

4. **The electorate in action.** The social and legal facts as to the membership of the corporation need to be supplemented by a study of the citizens in action. Among the functions which fall to or have been imposed upon the citizens are the formulation of public opinion, the organization of parties for united action, the nomination and election of officials, the adoption of charters and ordinances through the initiative or referendum or both, and various others. The problem here is as to the nature and extent of popular control over the city government.

5. **The municipal organization.** Every city government has a legislative and an administrative department, and there are also state or municipal courts within the city to perform the local judicial functions. But cities vary to an almost unbelievable extent in their municipal organizations. Some have governments in which the council is clearly dominant. In others the mayor has been given extensive and important functions. In recent years a great number of cities have discarded the older forms of organization in favor of the "commission plan" or the "city manager plan." These problems of organization are among the most important with which we have to deal.

6. **Municipal legislation.** The process by which ordinances are made will furnish the subject-matter for one chapter.

7. **The administrative process.** Far more important than the making of ordinances in the modern city is the process of carrying on the multifarious public services which modern cities perform. In this connection it is necessary to study the municipal civil service, or the problems of personnel; the organization and operation of departments; the making of the municipal budget, and its enforcement; taxation and borrowing; and purchasing, contracting, and the performance of public work.

8. **Municipal functions.** Finally it is necessary to get a picture of the numerous functions now performed by city governments for their people, to note the tendency of these functions to increase, and to consider the wisdom of further extensions of public activities.

THE INFLUENCE OF CITIES ON NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the preceding pages we have stated briefly some phases of the city problem which we think it important to keep in mind throughout the study of city government. We wish now, in concluding the chapter, to call attention to the important influences which cities may have upon the nation as a whole.

At the beginning of the Revolution, Boston and Philadelphia together had probably less than 60,000 inhabitants, and considerably less than two per cent of the national population. Yet it is not a great exaggeration to say that the Revolution was started in and to a large extent by the inhabitants of these two towns. In other countries the experience has been much the same. Everyone is familiar with the influence of London on the national affairs of the British Isles. Paris has had a still more dominant voice in the political affairs of France. In Russia, which is predominantly a nation of peasants, the revolutions of 1917 were carried out in the two cities of Petrograd and Moscow containing less than three per cent of the national population, by an organized and militant group which in each case constituted probably less than a majority even in these cities. Nevertheless these revolutionary movements succeeded in gaining control very quickly not only of the smaller towns but even of the rural districts. There is perhaps no need to point out the importance of the influence of Dublin and Belfast during the recent unhappy struggles in Ireland, or to name further examples of the same sort.

It would be too strong a statement to assert that as the city goes, so goes the nation, yet few would venture to deny that cities exercise an influence upon national affairs out of all proportion to their numbers. Modern democracy had its most conspicuous beginnings in urban places, in the communes of France and Belgium, and in the English boroughs. Urban democracies have carried on long and persistent struggles against privilege in all its forms. Having little property to lose, the masses in cities have not been afraid to stake all on a contest for liberty. Revolutions of the boulevards are frequent occurrences in

history. Having much to gain by so doing, urban plutocracies have frequently used their great financial powers to control city governments and state legislatures, if not the national government itself. Farmers and the inhabitants of small towns can and do organize for political action. They frequently win conspicuous successes. On the whole, however, they are not in a strong position. Public opinion is very largely made in the cities, which are the centers of communication and publication. Farmers are scattered, they have not the best means for getting information, and they are divided among themselves by certain conflicting interests and the competitive nature of their business. Though they own their farms, they are dependent upon middlemen and consumers in the city for the sale of their products, and upon urban manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers for the goods they need on the farms.

It is unquestionable, therefore, that the nation as a whole has a keen and direct interest in the political ideas and institutions of its cities. Most of our American constitutions were established by rural leaders to serve a rural people. To-day these constitutions no longer serve as well as they once did because we have become an urban industrial and commercial people. In the cities, from this day forth, the greater number of the people will obtain their education and their training in self-government. From the cities will come many of the great state and national leaders. "Democracy needs local self-government as its foundation," says Bryce.[6] Unless the democracy of the city is sound, what hope can there be for the nation? In wisdom, honesty, and efficiency, can the national government be far above the average city? Such are the questions which we must ask ourselves. There are those who will answer blithely that "the city is the hope of democracy." Others will substitute the word "despair" for "hope" in this quotation. If this volume does not give a direct and unqualified answer to these questions, it will at least serve to throw some light upon some phases of the problem.

REFERENCES

The city problem generally is so broad a topic that it is impossible to suggest any one work which will prove satisfactory. Attention may, however, be called here to that excellent work, *A Bibliography of Municipal Government in the United States*, Cambridge, Mass., 1915, by Professor W. B. Munro of Harvard University. Here may be found cited books and articles upon

[6] *Modern Democracies*, I, p. 320.

all phases of the politics, government, and administration of cities, as well as some upon urban social and economic conditions (see pages 262–66, 372–81).

In addition the student would do well to acquaint himself with the *National Municipal Review* (monthly, New York), and *The American City* (monthly, New York), as well as with any state publications dealing with municipal affairs.

The social problems of cities have also been dealt with very extensively in publications of recent years. Special attention may be directed to such studies as *The Pittsburgh Survey*, 6 vols., New York, 1909–14, as well as other surveys by the Russell Sage foundation, and others; to various studies by settlement house workers, such as Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, New York, 1911, Mary K. Simkhovitch, *The City Worker's World in America*, New York, 1917, R. A. Woods, *The City Wilderness*, Boston and New York, 1899; and R. A. Woods and A. J. Kennedy, *The Settlement Horizon*, New York, 1922; and to the numerous special studies which have been made by students in our leading urban universities, many of which have found their way into print. For material of this character see Munro's bibliography, pages 262–66, 372–81, and also current references in the *Survey-Graphic* (monthly, New York) and in the *American Journal of Sociology* (monthly, Chicago).

The economic foundations of city life are seemingly so obvious that very few have undertaken to write upon them as such. See, however, N. S. B. Gras, *Introduction to Economic History*, New York, 1922, for a brilliant new interpretation of the economic development of cities. A. F. Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1899, is still the best book in its field. It throws much light upon both the economic and the social structure of urban communities. In 1922 Mr. Malcolm Keir of the Dartmouth College department of economics published a very useful 4-page outline for a thesis in economics entitled *An Analysis of a City*. There is an inexhaustible store of material on urban economic conditions in publications of the federal census bureau and department of commerce, in financial and trade journals, in publications of local chambers of commerce, etc., but there have been few if any complete and thorough-going examinations of the actual economic organization of any great American city.

Materials on municipal organization and the process of government in cities will be referred to in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The manner in which the two American continents have been peopled and developed by the white nations of Europe is one of the chief wonders of modern times. It is a little more than four hundred years ago that Columbus, sailing courageously westward upon a forbidding and trackless sea, drew back the curtains which veiled an entire hemisphere and disclosed the Americas to the eyes and ken of the then civilized world. To us it seems that his startling discovery was at first inadequately appreciated. Men were not able at once to grasp its meaning. A century passed without any important permanent settlements in any part of the present United States. Then, about three hundred years ago, there were established English settlements at Jamestown (Virginia) and at Plymouth (Massachusetts), to be followed in a few decades by other English settlements up and down the coast from the Carolinas to Maine. By 1650 the discontented in all parts of Europe were beginning to turn eyes toward America. It is reported that in 1643 "there were men of eighteen different languages" in New Amsterdam. Already in the seventeenth century this little Dutch city was troubled by the problem of governing peoples of dissimilar speech and different national customs, a problem which causes anxiety in not a few American cities down to the present time.[1]

We should not overemphasize these beginnings. Had a census been taken in the English colonies in America two hundred years ago, at about 1723, the total number of persons, including free whites, indentured servants, and blacks, would probably not have exceeded 500,000. No cities, in the modern sense, existed. There were a few large towns. Boston had about 11,000 inhabitants, Philadelphia nearly 8,000, and New York about 7,500. Of the three, Philadelphia was incorporated for local government as a "borough" and New York as a city, but

[1] Thwaites, *The Colonies, 1492–1750*, p. 201; Peterson, *New York as an Eighteenth Century Municipality, Prior to 1731*, p. 2.

Boston was destined to spend another century as a mere "town." The only other communities of any size in the colonies were Salem, Massachusetts, and Newport, Rhode Island, including the town of Providence, both unincorporated. The latter had less than 5,000 people even in 1730. Eleven other towns or places had been incorporated as boroughs or cities, but of some of them it may be said as Jefferson said in naming the towns of Virginia: "There are other places at which, like some of the foregoing, the *laws* have said there shall be towns; but *nature* has said there shall not, and they remain unworthy of enumeration." Cities, indeed, were few and far between in the early days of American life.[2]

BEGINNING OF THE NATIONAL ERA

We step down the years, then, to 1790, when the first national census was taken. This was three hundred years after Columbus, and about one hundred and thirty years ago. The American people had already grown proud and vigorous. As colonists they had first settled the entire Atlantic seaboard, and had then carried on a long struggle for self-government, which culminated in the throwing off of a stubborn king. They had passed through years of war and political travail, and had finally established themselves under the national constitution which still controls their government. Washington was president, Jefferson, secretary of state. The people were, in numbers, 3,929,625, of whom over 750,000 were negroes. What were then the chief American cities? Only five towns had over 8,000 population; a sixth, Salem, Massachusetts, stood just under this line. At the head of the list stood the borough of Philadelphia, with 42,444 people. New York stood next with 33,131. Boston had 18,038, Charleston, South Carolina, 16,359, and Baltimore 13,503. Of the leading six, Boston, Salem, and Baltimore, were mere towns in their form of government. Charleston had been incorporated as a city at the end of the Revolutionary War. Only New York and Philadelphia could claim "ancient" municipal constitutions. The total population of the six was 131,396, or approximately that of such a city as Houston, Texas, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Scranton, Pennsylvania, or Springfield, Massachusetts, to-day. In fact, the six combined had only 3.3 per cent or one-thirtieth of the

[2] Bureau of the census, *A Century of Population Growth*, pp. 4–14; Fairlie, *Essays in Municipal Administration*, p. 50; Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, in *Writings*, Ford's ed., III, p. 213.

total national population. The Americans were primarily and preponderantly an agricultural people. The men who drafted our national constitution did so not for an urban and industrial people, but for one engaged in farming, fishing, and small trade. The president himself was a farmer who loved to live close to the soil.[3]

At first glance the migration from Europe and Africa to America of some tens of thousands of people, and the rise of a nation of four million souls in two hundred years may not appear in any sense a great achievement. Mere movements of people are not uncommon events in history. Were there nothing more than this, even with the then prevailing difficulties of ocean transportation, there would be little need of comment. What is important for us is the foundations which were so quickly laid for an American civilization. The peoples came not primarily for war and plunder, but for economic betterment, for religious freedom, and for civil liberty. Many fled hither, undoubtedly, to escape prosecution for misdeeds at home, or were sent here as a punishment. From Africa, by force and treachery, were brought thousands of uncivilized negroes, here to be sold for better or for worse, into the service of the dominant whites. The latter came mainly from the British Isles,—English, Scotch, Irish, and Welsh,—but there were natives also of nearly all the other western European states of the day, from the Scandinavian states south as far as Spain. There were Catholics as well as Protestants, although the latter predominated and generally kept control. Thus America became from the beginning the melting pot of creeds and peoples, where each group struggled for rights and recognition. The cosmopolitan character of the population was most noticeable in the seaboard towns.

The prevalent language, laws, and institutions, however, were those of Great Britain. The Dutch and the Swedes soon gave way upon these points. Almost from the beginning of English settlement in Virginia and Massachusetts the sturdy colonists, under their charter grants, began to weave a web of English local institutions. They had their townships or parishes and their counties for rural districts, and the borough organization for the urban towns or places which expected to be such.[4] These units of local government were steadily developed

[3] Bureau of the census, *A Century of Population Growth*, pp. 10, 11, 15.

[4] On local institutions in the colonial period, see especially Howard, *An Introduction to the Local Constitutional History of the United States*, vol. I, "Development of the Township, Hundred, and Shire"; Fairlie, *Essays in Municipal Administration*, ch. 4, "Municipal Corporations in the Colonies"; a series of monographs in

and adapted, by law and custom, to serve the local needs of the various colonies. They came very quickly to differ from colony to colony, and to be different also from those of England. Through all changes an essential similarity was retained. The spirit of independence, of local self-government, pervaded every branch of the local administration. Aided by the healthy neglect of their affairs shown by the British government, the colonists developed a genius for self-help. Local self-government became an important part of the everyday common life. Thus it happens that while in England the institutions of local government were reaching their lowest point, through corruption and indifference, it is safe to say that in America, where wealth and privileges had not yet accumulated, local administration was essentially sound. Men needed but to be given this social responsibility to develop the ability to conduct their own affairs.

These were the local institutions and this the situation into which were poured the ever-new increments of immigrants from the British Isles and the continent of Europe. They helped to mold it and were themselves molded by it. It is of interest to note, therefore, that while the states and the nation went through a period of agony while adjusting their machinery to the needs of a newly-won status of independence, local institutions were carried from the colonial through the revolutionary and constitutional periods almost unchanged. They had become a part, as it were, of the American habit of mind. Indeed, with the exception of some changes yet to be noted in city government, our local units are to-day, in powers and organization, at least, essentially what they were long before the Revolution.[5]

the Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science; and various municipal and county histories.

The student will understand that *borough* is an old word of Anglo-Saxon origin which is still used in England to designate a chartered municipality. In America we use instead the word *city*. It would be difficult to give a precise definition of either term, but in general both are applied only to urban, and not to rural places. On the other hand, a *township* or a *town* is usually a small rural district organized under general law for purposes of local government. Such an area usually has no urban population and no charter. *Counties* are the largest subdivisions of the state for administrative purposes. A county may be either urban or rural or both, but almost everywhere counties lack charters and are governed under general laws. As areas of local government *parishes* no longer exist in most of the states, although they are not unknown in the South.

[5] New York state legislative document (1923) no. 55, *Report of the Special Joint Committee on Taxation and Retrenchment*, 1923, pp. 9–17; James, *Local Government in the United States*, especially pp. 109–119.